This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

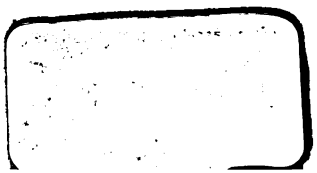
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

47.639.



47.639.

MIGRATORY BIRDS;

OR,

SUCH AS VISIT BRITAIN AT DIFFERENT SEASONS OF THE YEAR.

A GUIDE

TO THEIR FAVOURITE PLACES OF RESORT,

WITH THEIR

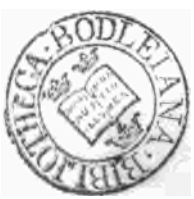
NATURAL HISTORY, SONGS,

AND THE BENEFITS WHICH THEIR MIGRATIONS CONFER ON MANKIND.

31

LONDON:
CRADOCK AND CO., 48, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1847.



London : Printed by WILLIAM CLOWES and SONS, Stamford Street.

CONTENTS.

ARRIVAL OF BIRDS.

MARCH.

	PAGE
WRYNECK	6
Least Willow-Wren	8
Turtle-Dove	8
Great Plover, or Stone-Curlew	9

APRIL.

Chimney-Swallow	11
Martin, or Window-Swallow	14
Swift, or Black-Martin	18
Sand-Martin	21
Black-Cap	24
Red-Start	27
White-Throat	28
Yellow Willow-Wren	29
Common Willow-Wren	30
Nightingale	32
Cuckoo	34
Grasshopper-Lark	37
Fauvette-Pettichaps	41
Corn-Crake, or Land-Rail	42

MAY.

PAGE
Goat-Sucker, or Fern-Owl 43
Spotted Fly-Catcher 46

AUTUMN AND WINTER BIRDS OF PASSAGE.

SEPTEMBER.

Red-Wing, or Wind-Thrush 50
Fieldfares 51
Hooded or Royston Crow 53
Wild Pigeon 53
Woodcock 55

WINTER BIRDS OF PASSAGE, COMPRISING WADERS AND SWIMMERS.

Wild Swan 57
Grey-Lag, or Wild Goose 59
White-Fronted, or Laughing-Goose 60
Bean-Goose 60
Barnacle, or Tree Goose 60
Eider, or St. Cuthbert's Duck 61
Scoter, or Black Diver 62
Common Wild Duck 62
Widgeon 62
Gadwall, or Grey Duck 62
Pockard 62
Golden-Eye 62
Long-Tailed Duck, or Swallow-Tailed Shieldrake . . 63
Solan Geese, or Gannets 63

MIGRATORY BIRDS.

SPRING AND SUMMER BIRDS OF PASSAGE.

"And you, ye free and fearless birds of air,
Are charged each year, on missionary wing,
The same bright lesson o'er the seas to bear.
Heaven-guided wanderers, with the winds of spring
Sing on, before the storm and after, sing!
And call us to your echoing woods away
From worldly cares; and bid our spirits bring
Faith to imbibe deep wisdom from your lay."—HEMANS.

WHY is it that many persons pass through life, observing little, and knowing less, concerning the natural objects by which they are surrounded, of such birds especially as come and go at fixed periods, and make glad the fields of Britain? Even among those who live in the country, few can distinguish the song of the Wood-lark from that of the Goldfinch, and with each of those dissimilar songsters no pleasant thoughts are associated. I would fain, therefore, send forth this little volume, written plainly, and yet, I trust, not without considerable interest, small in size and inexpensive, that those who live among green fields, or quit occasionally the hum and stir of the great city to scent the new-mown hay or the fragrance of flowers, may be able to distinguish the joyous little minstrels, whose sweet songs both soothe and elevate the mind. We will take them in their order, beginning with those that arrive in the month of

MARCH.

WRYNECK—*Fynx Torquilla* of Linnæus.

Strange it seems that when winds are piping loud, and storms of sleet are abroad, small birds should find their way to the shores of Britain; yet so it is. The Wryneck, earliest daughter of the year, arrives about the middle of March. Her artless nest is constructed with dry grass, in the hollow of some aged tree, time-worn or excavated by a woodpecker, having within it an accumulation of decayed wood, and of which the entrance barely admits of going in and out. Here, then, she deposits eight or ten small eggs, and sits securely on them, looking forth to the waving branches of the tree, safe from the beating storm or sleet which often rages without, and causes the old oak to creak and groan beneath its fury. Though similar in many points to her stationary neighbour, the untravelled Woodpecker, as regards the formation of her feet and bill, she belongs to a separate genus, and never associates with them. Those who are much abroad in the early season of the year, when as yet the primrose has scarcely begun to peep from amid the moss, or the hazel to hang forth her light brown tassels, may see perchance the Wryneck on the branch of some tree in the lone forest, or beside the streamlet's dash, where birches and trembling aspens grow wild and high, and obscure the sunbeams. There he sits erect on the branch, with his body almost bent backwards, and writhing his neck and head with a slow and apparently involuntary motion. His mate, meanwhile, is sitting in some near tree, his sole companion; for the Wryneck is a solitary bird, and does not associate with his kind. Their food consists of ants, or such insects as harbour in the rough bark of trees, which they extract by means of a long and cylindrical tongue, tipped with a horny substance, and capable of being pushed forward or drawn readily into the bill. Their feet, too, are curiously constructed with an obvious reference to their mode of life: the toes are placed two before and two behind; the claws sharp, much hooked, and formed for climbing the branches of trees, on which they can run in all directions with great facility.

Wearing the livery of the family or tribe to which

poetic fancy has assigned her, that of the sober-vested Cuckoo, whose handmaid the country people call the female Wryneck, coming over as if to prepare the woodlands for the reception of that welcome bird, and uttering her soft voice in the depth of many a lonely wood, her plumage, like that of the male, consists of different shades of brown, but so elegantly arranged as to form an investment of exquisite neatness. An irregular line of dark brown, inclining to black, descends from the head to the middle of the back, which is otherwise ash-coloured, streaked, and powdered with brown; the throat and under side of the neck being of a reddish brown, crossed with fine bars of black, while the under surface is of a pale ash, varied with irregular triangular spots. The larger quill feathers are beautifully chequered on the outer webs with alternate spots of dark brown and rust colour; the tail feathers are ornamented with black bars, the intervening spaces freckled with dark brown.

Such is the singularly chaste and elegant investment of the Wryneck, which is described the more minutely because little known, and that the lovers of forest scenery and aged trees may, when they see this small bird hopping from branch to branch, rejoice in the certainty that the voice of the Cuckoo will soon be heard, and all pleasant flowers spring up wherever she appears. And very appropriate to this small bird, thus haunting among leafless branches, are those beautiful lines in which the poet of "The Seasons" bids the sorrowful and desponding to learn a lesson of confidence from the birds of the air:—

"Look up and smile away your low despair—
See the light tenant of the barren air;
To him nor stores nor granaries belong,
Nought but the woodland and the pleasing song;
Yet your kind heavenly Father bends his eye
To the least wing that flits along the sky.
To Him they sing when Spring renews the plain,
To Him they cry in Winter's pinching reign;
Nor is their music nor their plaint in vain:
He hears the gay and the distressful call,
And with unsparing bounty fills them all."

LEAST WILLOW-WREN—*Motacilla trochilus*, Lin.

A welcome guest is the Least Willow-Wren, one of three sisters who visit this country at different periods of the year; the one in yellow vestments inclining to olive, the other with a greenish olive hue, but the Least Willow-Wren is somewhat darker, being more of a mouse colour, with a breast of dull silvery white, whence in some places the cognomen of Linty White. Her voice, though weak and consisting of a single note, is soft and pleasing, and the repetition does not weary. She may be heard in woods and coverts, warbling her simple song from among the thick branches of a tree, or in willows by the water side. Small difference, if any, is discoverable in the colour or the note of either male or female: they are modest, inoffensive little birds, having neither gaudy plumes nor melodious voices, requiring no concealment; and unsought either by sportsmen or bird-sellers; they pass their days with none to injure or entrap them, in calmness and security.

TURTLE-DOVE—*Columba turtur*, Lin.

Listen to a tender and plaintive voice, sounding from the topmost bough of a high tree. It is that of the Turtle-Dove, who seems with gentle and soothing accents to cheer his weary mate, telling her, perchance, that though their passage over the wide sea was long and weary, and fierce the winds that ruffled her plumage, yet that the woodlands will soon break into leaf and beauty, and soft spring breezes will come, loaded with fragrance from off the pea and clover fields. And need there is that the Turtle-Dove should cheer his mate with hopes of better days, for the time of their arrival is that of cloudy skies, and leafless trees, and storms of sleet and rain, with the moaning of sad winds through forest walks. But when the woodlands are seen in all their beauty and luxuriance, and where but a short time since stood forth the ramified branches of high trees against a cloudy sky, green leaves appear, and the songs of innumerable birds sound from out the groves and sunny glens, their favourite resorts; you may hear that same soft voice from some high tree, for there is his nest, and his mate is sitting on her two dusty-coloured eggs, waiting patiently, and yet joyfully,

for the moment when her young ones shall emerge from out the shell. And thus, in reference to the smallness of her family, sings the rustic poet :—

"The Granny Wren, she lays ten,
And brings them up like gentlemen ;
While I can only keep my poor two,
Coo, Coo, Coo."

The bright yellow eyes of the Turtle-Dove, with a spot of black feathers on either side the neck, distinguish her from others of the tribe. Emblems in all ages of love and constancy, who does not associate with the family of Columbine remembrances of peculiar interest? Pliny relates that a messenger-pigeon brought intelligence of approaching succours to Mutina when besieged : Thuanus, that when Harlem was reduced to the last extremity, and on the point of opening her gates to a base and barbarous enemy, a design was formed to relieve her, and the intelligence was conveyed to the citizens by a letter tied under the wing of a pigeon.

"Sweet bird ! thy truth shall Harlem's walls attest,
And unborn ages consecrate thy nest :
When, with the silent eloquence of grief,
With looks that ask'd, yet dar'd not hope relief,
Want, with her babes, round generous Valour clung,
To wring the slow surrender from her tongue,
'Twas thine to animate her closing eye ;
Alas ! 'twas thine, perchance, the first to die,
Crush'd by her meagre hand when welcom'd from the sky."
ROGERS.

Next in order among the few migratory birds that arrive in March, is the

GREAT PLOVER, STONE-CURLEW, OR NORFOLK PLOVER—*Charadrius œdicnemus.*

Why is it that the Great Plover, a creature free to range wherever his inclinations lead, is rarely, if ever, seen in the northern parts of the island, though preferring stony places or hill-sides ?

It seems as if an unalterable law was impressed upon him, restricting his abode to the southern parts of Britain,

and from which neither the stony places nor beetling crags in which he especially delights may allure his flight. Norfolk appears to be a favourite resort, and this is the more extraordinary because that county is in general highly cultivated, and presents likewise an extent of sandy wastes, neither of which are his assigned localities. Problems undoubtedly there are in nature, which it is impossible to solve; and the restricting of birds and animals to prescribed districts, when free to range wherever it best pleases them, is one of the most inexplicable.

Unlike all other birds, with the exception of the Cuckoo and the Ostrich, Plovers do not construct a nest for their young. The female lays two or three eggs on the bare ground, sheltered by a stone, or within a small hole scooped in the sand. The eggs are dusty white, varied with spots of a deep reddish colour, and slight streaks. The young, when hatched, run immediately from their birth-place, and the mother, who watches within sight, leads them to some field, where they skulk among the stones, which they so nearly resemble as not readily to be discovered.

The Plover has great power of wing, and flies with exceeding strength, though generally preferring the gloom of evening for his rapid flight and movements, for he runs swiftly; and those who are much abroad, in his usual haunts, are often startled by hearing a hoarse kind of whistle, three or four times repeated, somewhat resembling the turning of a rusty wheel handle. Buffon sought to express this strange kind of sound by the words "turtiu, turtiu," and says that it may be compared to the sound of a third flute, dwelling on three or four tones, from a flat to a sharp. And yet, though proverbially cautious as regards going forth in the day, the Plover is occasionally surprised, at which time he springs to some considerable distance, and mostly escapes before the sportsman can bring him down. He runs, likewise, nearly as swift as a dog, and when beyond the reach of danger he stops suddenly, and squats upon the ground.

In length the Plover is about sixteen inches. With a black and yellow bill, and a pale yellow streak above and beneath the eye, his plumage is generally of a pale tawny brown, and down the middle of each feather appears a

dark streak. The tail is short, and somewhat rounded, while a dark band crosses the middle of each plume. But one of the chief characteristics of the Plover are his yellow legs, bare of feathers above the knees, which are very thick, as if swelled: hence one of his cognomens, of Thick-knee'd Bustard.

And constant as the coming back of the Wry-neck, Willow-wren, and Plover, the Thrush begins to sing, and the Ring-dove coos. Beside clear streams, and in marshy places, the bright yellow tassels of the willow look cheerful among the leafless branches of other trees: flowers of the asp, the alder, and poplar begin to open, and bees are heard to hum around the solemn yew, seeking farina among its light brown flowers. Village children delight themselves in gathering primroses and violets, speedwells and yellow cups; and in this month also, buds of the cherry and currant, the water elder, thorn, and larch gradually expand.

> "The spirit of bright hours
> Then woos in every wind; fresh wild-leaf scents
> From thickets, where the lonely stock-dove broods,
> Enter our lattice; fitful songs of joy
> Float in with each soft current of the air."—HEMANS.

APRIL.

CHIMNEY-SWALLOW—*Hirundo rustica*, Lin.

Scarcely have the bustling winds of the vernal equinox ceased to blow, than the Swallow makes his appearance, and begins with his companions to construct their curiously framed nests, either in chimneys, or beneath the eaves of houses. Who in passing by a cottage garden does not frequently observe a row of cylindrically shaped nests, plastered with mud beneath the thatch, and Swallow-people flying in and out with food for their young? And yet though called a Chimney or House Swallow, this confiding bird does not uniformly attach himself to dwelling places—he occasionally prefers the rafters of barns and outhouses, as in the day of Virgil.

The shaft of an old well is likewise an occasional resort,

through which chalk has been drawn up for the purpose of manure; but with us in general the House Swallow prefers to build in chimneys, and loves to haunt those stacks, for the sake of warmth, near which a constant fire is kept up, and hence it often happens that she flies in and out among the smoke. Her nest, which is generally placed five or six feet below the top, consists, like that of the House Martin, of a crust or shell composed of common earth, mixed with short pieces of straw, as a kind of frame-work, but with this difference, that whereas the shell constructed by the Martin is nearly hemispherical, that of the Swallow is open at the top, and resembles a deep dish, lined with fine grass or feathers.

Wonderful is the address with which this industrious bird ascends and descends securely through her narrow pass, and very curious is the sound produced by the vibration of her wings, when hovering over the chimney. Most probably she submits to the inconveniences of so strange a domicile in order to secure her brood from rapacious birds, such as Kites and Owls, which not unfrequently fall down the chimneys in seeking to obtain their prey. When the young are hatched, and become sufficiently grown to fly, it is very amusing to watch their gradual introduction into life. At first they have great difficulty in rising from the shaft, and are fed on the top of the chimney; they are then conducted to some neighbouring tree, where they may be seen sitting in a row, and most carefully attended to by the parent birds. A few days more and they begin to fly, though unable to feed themselves; and some of the most daring keep close to their parents, while in pursuit of flies. When a mouthful is obtained, on a signal, apparently well understood between the Swallows and their nestlings, they advance one towards the other, and meeting at an angle, the young receive the food, with a little note of complacency.

A second brood succeeds, and the first, when able to provide for themselves, are seen joyfully congregated on sunny roofs, and towers, and among the branches of trees.

Lessons, and those of no ordinary interest, may be learned from birds and animals. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise," said the natural

historian of ancient days. Go likewise to the Swallow, all those who care not to provide for their own households, and observe her unwearied affection and industry. From morning till night, through the length of a summer day, while there is a family to be supported, does that fond bird skim close to the ground, with sudden turns and quick evolutions, in order to obtain insect food. Avenues and walks among hedges, pasture fields and mown meadows where cattle graze, are her delight, and more especially if interspersed with trees. You may know when a fly is taken, by the smart snap of her bill, which resembles the shutting of a watch case, but the motions of the mandibles are too quick for the eye to follow.

The male bird, in like manner, goes on in the same unwearied duty, yet not so constantly, because he has another office to perform. This is to watch the approach of hostile birds. For no sooner does a foe appear, than his shrill and warning note is heard, and immediately a troop of Martins and Sparrows, with his brother Swallows, and some of the most courageous among the feathery dames, hasten with loud cries, and buffét and strike the enemy till they have driven him to a distance; darting with incredible celerity upon his back, and rising unharmed into the air. Swallows have been even known to sound an alarm, and strike at cats, when climbing warily the roofs of houses. Very pleasant it is to watch the nimble movements of these active birds, whether in danger or security. They are bold flyers, ranging to distant commons in windy weather, which birds in general dislike: they even frequent exposed sea-port towns, and make little excursions over the salt water. Horsemen on wide downs are often closely attended by a company of Swallows for miles together, sporting before and behind, sweeping around, and collecting such insects as are roused by the trampling of the horses' feet, when the wind is high. They also drink in their rapid flights, skimming the surface of the water, and sipping as they fly; they wash too on the wing, dropping in hot weather into some clear stream, and then as rapidly emerging, and this so quickly that the eye can scarcely follow their motions.

When the weather is soft and sunny, you may hear these welcome birds singing sweetly, either on trees and

chimney tops, in a kind of concert, or cheering themselves with their own minstrelsy, as they perform their nimble evolutions through the air. Naturalists, who a few years since found green fields in the neighbourhood of London, and listened to the song of birds where now are heard the creaking of heavy waggons and the clatter of street-pacing steeds, speak of Swallows haunting the new and open parts of London, near the fields; but yet not entering, like the House Martin, the close and crowded portions of the city.

Swallows are distinguished from their congeners by the length and forkedness of their tails; by a red chin and forehead, and the exquisite black feathers with which they are invested, at one time inclining to a purplish blue, at another to a greenish brown. Lucullus, when referring to the migrations of the Swallow, boasted that he changed his climate with the birds of passage.

> "Through each he rov'd the tenant of a day,
> And with the swallow wing'd the year away."
>
> ROGERS.

MARTIN, MARTLET, OR WINDOW-SWALLOW—*Hirundo urbica.*

A few House Martins make their appearance somewhat later than the Swallows. Unlike their relatives, the top of the head, the wings, and tail are of a dusty brown: the back feathers are black, glossed with blue, and the under surface of a pure white: the legs are covered with white downy feathers to the claws, while those of the Swallow are short, delicately fine, and nearly black.

Joyous creatures are they: for some days after their arrival sporting in the air, or borne along by the breezes of the spring, dipping, when the days are warm, into the nearest lake, and then suddenly springing upwards and wheeling in quick circles, as if rejoicing in the consciousness of existence. But soon the business of life commences, and about the middle of May, in favourable weather, each pair of Martins begin to think in earnest of providing a dwelling for their young. This they effect by forming a nest of such dirt or loam as is found most readily, tempered and wrought together with bits of

broken straws to render it rough and tenacious. But the fixing of this nest, or rather its foundation, against a rock or wall without any projecting ledge, requires the utmost patience and ingenuity. The artificers cling not only with their claws, but in some degree support themselves by pressing their tails against the wall, and thus upheld they work and plaster the kind of mortar into the brick or stone. And then, in order that the work while yet moist may not fall down through its own weight, the provident architects prudently forbear from going on too rapidly. They build only in the morning, when the air is cool, and pass the remainder of the day in seeking food or performing their nimble evolutions. The mortar has consequently time to dry, and about half an inch forms a sufficient layer for one time. Thus careful workmen, when they build mud walls, raise but a moderate portion, and then desist, lest the work should become top heavy and fall down. For about ten mornings these industrious birds may be seen going backwards and forwards, as soon as light, with bits of clay in their bills, to some near stream, where they moisten the clay, and then return to plaster it on with their chins, moving their heads while thus employed with a quick vibratory motion, till at length a strong hemispheric nest is formed, with a small aperture towards the top, firm, compact, and warm, and admirably adapted to the purpose for which it is designed. Yet, sad to say, the owners, after all their toil, are not unfrequently ejected by a neighbouring Sparrow, who seizes on the dwelling and lines it after her own manner.

Where Martins have found a home, there they generally continue, and will return year after year to the same spot. Those beneath whose projecting roofs these constant birds have made their nests, love to see them come back again. "The young buds of the horse-chesnut are beginning to unfold, primroses and cuckoo-flowers are already opening on mossy banks," say the children of the cottagers; "our Martins will soon be here."

They also affect old walls and buttresses, and never do I remember having witnessed so large a colony as at Haddon Hall, in Derbyshire. How many solemn and interesting associations are connected with the lofty halls and echoing apartments of that deserted mansion, which

the princely races of Peverel, of Vernon, and of Rutland have successively occupied!—but now the creeping ivy throws its branches far and wide, and every projecting frieze is covered with nests, round which the parent birds are seen hovering.

> "This castle hath a pleasant site; the air
> Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
> Unto our gentle senses. . . . . .
> This guest of summer,
> The temple-haunting martlet, does approve,
> By his lov'd masonry, that heaven's breath
> Smells wooingly there. No jutting frieze,
> Buttress, nor coigne of vantage, but this bird
> Hath made his pendent nest and procreant cradle.
> Where they most breed, I have observed,
> The air is delicate."—*Macbeth*.

The shell or crust of such nests being a sort of rustic-work full of knobs and protuberances on the outside, occasionally requires some slight reparation, but this is soon done; and the inside, when lined with soft grass or feathers, or moss, interwoven with wool, receives from three to five small white eggs. Within this home, the centre of all their joys, the careful parents sit by turns, relieving one another; or flying occasionally together, they dip in the nearest stream. The young, when hatched, soon become impatient of confinement, and sit looking out, while their parents, by clinging to the nest, supply them with food from morning till night. Next in their simple annals comes the all important period when those young creatures first emerge from out the nest, and commit themselves to that element which from the earliest period of creation has sustained the Swallow tribe. At first timidly, but soon boldly, they dart from the sheltering roof, and accompanying the parents in their rapid flight, they are fed on the wing, and yet so quickly, that a looker on must have attended very carefully to their motions before he can perceive the fact. But no sooner are the nestlings able to provide for themselves than they launch away, and the Swallow parents take thought for another brood. The first families may be seen congregating in flocks, clustering and hovering on sunny mornings and evenings around towers and steeples, and on the

roofs of houses. These assemblies usually commence the first week in August, and it is worthy of remark that such birds as are hatched in a ready finished nest, generally get the start of those which inhabit a new dwelling by at least ten days or a fortnight.

A considerable difference prevails in the capacities of birds, as well as animals. The wisest are very particular in their choice of situation: they will even begin a nest, and leave it unfinished, and that, doubtless, for some good reason; but when once a choice is made, and the nest completed, it serves for several seasons. Others, on the contrary, have been known to select for the building of their future home, a house without eaves, in an exposed district; preferring even the corner of a shallow window facing to the south-east and south-west, and consequently liable to have their nest washed down by every hard storm. Yet still the foolish birds dragged on from one summer to another without growing wiser by experience. It was piteous to see them labouring when half their nest was washed away, and bringing mud with which to repair the walls, and thus they went on till the setting in of hot weather enabled them to complete their nests. Such were undoubtedly exceptions to the sagacity of the Martin tribe, which in general prefer to build in a north-east or north-west aspect, lest the heat of the sun should cause their walls to crack.

Unlike many of their kind, which delight in solitary places, loving sand-banks, shaded with ferns and creeping plants, and far from any human habitation, Martins frequent towns, especially if within reach of a lake or river, and hence they do not avoid the close air of London. I have seen them nestling in the Borough, as well as in the Strand and Fleet-street; but they did not look much like the Martins that haunt our cottage eaves and windows, and which the villagers delight to welcome. Their jet black feathers, glossed with blue, and the downy white of their under surface, partook of their sooty domicile. It seemed strange that birds which rarely wander far for food, and which affect sheltered districts, beside ponds or lakes, hanging woods or tree-girt valleys, especially in windy weather, and which, from the shortness of their wings and tails, are the least agile of the tribe, and inca-

pable of such quick and glancing evolutions as the Swallow, should select for their temporary abode the heart of a great city, where a cheerless desert of roofs are seen, and instead of forest trees, tall chimney-pots alone diversify the prospect. But so it was. True to their natural habits, neither sinking low nor rising high, they wheeled about with a placid easy motion in the middle region of the air, apparently undisturbed by the din beneath. Few regarded them, but some there were to whom the sight of those familiar birds seemed to bring up thoughts of far off homes, for they looked up, though but for a moment, and then went on with quickened steps, as men are wont to do when the inward thought disturbs them.

SWIFT, OR BLACK MARTIN—*Hirundo apus*, Lin.

This bird, the largest of the swallow tribe in Britain, is undoubtedly the latest comer. One only instance is recorded of the arrival of a pair of Swifts before the last week in April, for they usually fly in pairs; and when the springs are late and frosty, they frequently do not reach the coast of Britain till the beginning of May.

Swifts, like their relatives, the Sand-Martins, are very defective in architecture. Their nests are simply formed of dry grass and feathers, rudely put together in the crannies of old castle walls or towers, and often on the top of church walls, under the roof, and their movements cannot therefore be very readily watched, although there is good reason to believe that they begin sitting about the middle of May, and continue till the 9th of June. Such, in general, is their domicile; haunting high buildings, steeples, and old towers, they impart a feeling of cheerfulness to many a time-worn pile, desolate and tenantless, save by this constant bird; but occasionally some pairs frequent the poorest cottages, and most welcome are they to the inmates. Good luck is said to betide the family whose roof, however humble, shelters the nest of an *hirundine*.

> "And there, 'mid sheltering eaves secure,
> The martin's mud-built domes endure
> From year to year, and long shall stand,
> Untouch'd by sacrilegious hand;

And with a fond parental care
Their numerous progeny they rear,
That still a constant twittering keep,
And from each nursery window peep."—HOLLOWAY.

Black Martins differ widely from their relatives in laying but two eggs at a time, milk-white, long, and peaked at the small end, whereas the other species have generally from four to six. Very nimble in their movements, and early on the wing, these birds leave their coverts with the dawn of morning, and are on the wing at least sixteen hours in the height of summer. When about to retire with the last flush of day, they assemble high in the air, and wheel round and round with incredible celerity. Hot sultry weather especially delights them; they are then all alive, and their movements are incessant. Small companies may be seen very early in the morning, when as yet the soaring lark has scarcely begun to warble, skimming with extreme velocity round steeples and high towers, squeaking as they go, in a very clamorous manner. Those who narrowly observe them, report that the companies consist of males, serenading their sitting hens, and not without reason, for the flying Swifts seldom utter a sound till they approach the walls and eaves, at which time those within respond a little inward note of complacency. They are likewise seen performing a variety of evolutions; sometimes in close ranks, following the direction of a street, at another encompassing some high tower with loud cries: their movements are light and graceful, they can glide at will through the air without stirring their wings, and then as suddenly move them with frequent and quickly repeated strokes.

Towards evening the sitting birds rush forth, and make a few nimble evolutions, snatching a hasty meal, and then returning to their nest. But when the young are hatched, about the middle or latter end of July, the trouble of procuring food to the parent birds is comparatively easy, on account of the smallness of their households; while Swallows and Martins, which have numerous families, feed them every two or three minutes, and have in consequence no small difficulty to obtain a constant supply. The teaching them to fly and perch is likewise a

matter of no small importance; but young Swifts are never seen to perch, and consequently the development of their habits is rarely noticed in the country.

When fully grown, they accompany their parents in search of insects till able to provide for themselves; and in general they range much higher than others of the tribe—a proof that winged insects abound at considerable elevations. They also fly to vast distances, for rapid motion is to them rather a pleasure than exertion. Their powers seem commensurate with their wings, which are longer in proportion than those of almost any other bird; and it happens not unfrequently that these active creatures may be seen skimming over the surface of pools, in quest of May and dragon flies. Wet weather does not interrupt them, and they are out all day in dew-like rains. Hence it may be inferred that insects are not affected by gentle showers, and that their own feathers are so constructed and arranged as to resist wet; but windy weather, with heavy rain, seems to incommode them, as they are then rarely seen.

Though differing from others of the Swallow tribe in the smallness of their families, and in bringing up only one brood during the year, they are not wanting in natural affection. An ornithologist having untiled a roof over the nest of a Swift, the mother remained unmoved; and so great was her love that, regardless of safety, she even permitted herself to be taken in the hand. The young were then carefully brought down, and placed on the grass-plot, where they tumbled about and were as helpless as infants. While contemplating their unfledged and unwieldy forms, with heads too heavy for their necks to support, how wonderful was the thought that such helpless creatures would, in little more than a fortnight, be able to dash through the air with inconceivable velocity, and traverse most probably, in their migrations, vast continents and oceans distant as the equator!

Memorandums of this kind, connected also with the leafing of trees and opening of flowers, might well beguile the leisure hours of many who live in the country, and open a source of daily amusement. If friends who reside in different parts of England would occasionally compare such notes, they would find unfailing occupation in mea-

dows and among green lanes, and render cheerful many a solitary walk.

But to return to our hirundines. Their arrival indicates the coming of pleasant weather and long days. Currants and raspberries are either in leaf or flower, according to the season; apricot, plum, and pear trees are equally advanced. The Nightingale begins to sing, bees hum around the yellow catkins of the willow, and in lonely sedge-grown places the strange note of the Bittern is often heard.

> "List, the Bittern sounds his drum,
> Booming from the sedgy shallow."

The peculiar construction of the foot distinguishes the Swift from all other birds, excepting the Great White-bellied Swift of Gibraltar. It is so disposed as to present all the four toes forward; while the smallest, which ought to be the back one, consists of a single bone, the others having two each. This rare and peculiar construction evidently points out the purposes to which the feet are assigned, namely, that of clinging to walls while employed in the construction of a nest, or feeding the young when hatched. The plumage of the Swift is glossy black, with greenish reflections, except the chin, which is white; the wings are long, measuring from tip to tip about eighteen inches, and the tail is much forked. When skimming through the soft summer air, Swifts utter one harsh, screaming note; but though harsh, it is not displeasing, being associated with cloudless skies; and those who hear it in far off lands, often remember with sad hearts the pleasant fields and delights of home which that one short note recalls. Swifts may be seen in London, about the Tower, playing and feeding over the river; some churches near the Borough are also their resorts, but they do not venture, like the House Martin, into the close and narrow streets.

SAND-MARTIN, OR SAND-SWALLOW—*Hirundo riparia.*

Few particulars have been ascertained concerning the life and habits of this little bird, smallest of the Swallow tribe, disclaiming as it does connexion with man, and haunting wild heaths and commons with lakes or ample

streamlets, while its relatives, especially the Swallow and House Martin, are gentle and familiar, and never seem to think themselves safe but when under his protection.

Arriving at the same time with the Swallow, they immediately betake themselves to their lonely domiciles; and while there are few towns or large villages which do not abound with House Martins, few churches, towers, or steeples round which the Swifts do not congregate, and scarcely a hamlet or cottage, however poor, that has not its Swallow; Bank Martins, scattered here and there, lead a sequestered life among sand-banks and beside some few rivers. Hence the sand-pits and banks of lakes in Woolmer Forest are their chosen haunts, nor even in the most unfavourable weather do they frequent the cottages that are scattered in that wild district. An accurate observer mentions, that the only instance which came within his notice of any deviation in this respect was at Bishop's Waltham, in the same county, where Sand-Martins were seen to nestle and bring up their young in the old scaffold holes of the back wall of William of Wykeham's stables. But this wall stands in a very sequestered place, fronting a beautiful lake, belted with extensive woodlands.

"Methinks they love to watch the clouds
That cast their shadows o'er the stream,
When gathering gloom the landscape shrouds,
Or breaks at eve the gorgeous gleam,
Tinging with gold that grey old lake,
Beside whose wild and sedgy shore
The Bittern doth his lone nest make,
When winter's sounding storms are o'er."

M. ROBERTS.

To the lover of nature few objects are more interesting than a rugged sand-bank, shaded with old trees, and inhabited by a colony of Sand-Martins. One such scene rises before me in a wild and lonely spot in Surrey. The way to it led through lanes, with high banks on either side, and over head the branches of trees came drooping. Large tufts of ferns sprung from out the fissures, and depended over old fantastic roots, which often grasped the huge stones as if to obtain a firm footing; and wherever a sunbeam stole through the thickly-tangled

canopy of leaves, there the moss looked greener, and the prattling streamlet that wandered down the steep declivity flashed and sparkled as if bidding welcome. Narrower grew the path, and louder the streamlet sounded as it began to race among the stones, and the way looked somewhat like the bed of a half-dry torrent, till suddenly the road widened, and spread out into a spacious area, shaded with trees of giant growth; but here the sunbeams had full access, and gloriously they shone upon a rugged sand-bank, which rose to a considerable elevation, and was perforated towards the top with innumerable holes, homes of Sand-Martins, where they brought up their young, far above the reach of climbing schoolboys, who often vainly sought to make good their footing. Some few were looking contentedly from their holes, others went in and out, making a little harsh noise which seemed to express displeasure at our intrusion; but the greater number, apparently confident of security, flitted about with odd jerks and vacillations not unlike the motions of a butterfly, and this peculiar mode of flying was most probably adapted to the insects on which they feed. Very mild and beautiful was this lone spot; cheering too, for every animated object had been shut out from the rocky and darkly-shaded pathway that led to it. And pleasant it ever is to witness happy and rejoicing creatures thus congregated together, with soft summer airs playing round them, and the sun cheerfully shining on them, and the mellow voice of an ample streamlet sounding amid the labyrinth of trees and underwood in its onward progress to a neighbouring lake.

But though avoiding all peopled districts, and, when free to choose, affecting the most retired places, Sand-Martins have been seen haunting the skirts of London, and skimming over the pools that once looked black as Styx, in St. George's Fields and about Whitechapel. Neither sand-banks nor bold shores were to be seen in the neighbourhood, yet here they nestled in the scaffold holes of deserted buildings. Poor birds! want of strength, or perhaps some accident, prevented distant flight, or perchance a heavy gale of wind hurried them to that ungenial spot; and scarcely might they leave it. Bewildered by the strange sight and sounds of a great city,

where they found a resting-place, there they would abide; and this may also account for the Sand-Martins that occasionally frequent the banks of the Thames, in some places below London Bridge.

Sand-Martins differ from their kind in the diminutiveness of their size, and in their colour, which resembles that of a mouse. Near Valencia, in Spain, they are sold by the country people, who call them, probably from their jerking, desultory mode of flight, Papilion de Montaona.

BLACK-CAP—*Motacilla Atricapilla*, Lin.

"Merrily, merrily, sing we now,
Under the blossoms that grow on the bough."

Such is the haunt and occupation of this charming little bird, which accompanies the showery April, to build her simple nest among thickly tangled underwood near the ground. She may be seen in gardens abounding with fruit trees, and apple orchards; a small olive grey bird, with the upper mandible of a dark horn colour, the lower one light blue, distinguished from the male by her head being of a dull russet colour, instead of that jet black cap which gives a cognomen to the tribe. In both the throat and breast are silvery gray, the sides of the head and back of the neck ash coloured. Few of nature's choristers are more melodious, or sing so sweetly and so well, having a full, deep, loud, and yet wild pipe; but the strain is of short continuance, and the motions of the bird desultory; but when he sits calmly, and seems in earnest, he pours forth a very sweet, but inward melody, with a great variety of soft and gentle modulations, so closely resembling those of the Nightingale as occasionally to be mistaken for that bird.

"Hark! hark! how sweet the Black-Cap sings
Before my casement, on the tree!
Ah, rest, dear bird, thy wandering wings,
And stay and breakfast here with me!

Well have we met—but meet no more!
Then, O! prolong thy little stay—
For soon, the song and visit o'er,
We each, dear bird! must flit away."—HOLLOWAY.

Black-Caps feed on insects, small worms, and berries; and when the female is occupied with sitting, the male takes his turn, and often flies to a considerable distance to bring her food, solacing himself when his work is done with singing on some near bough, and hard must be the heart that could needlessly disturb such harmless little birds, while thus employed in their domestic duties: when with distended throat, and eyes sparkling with intelligence and joy, the Black-Cap seeks to cheer the weary occupation of his faithful mate, and she on her part sits patiently through a summer day, or, if leaving for a few brief moments the centre of all her joys, returning again with increased celerity to resume her charge. A creature formed for liberty, delighting to fly abroad in the open air, to spring from bough to bough, and to fill the woods with her soft accents, submits to confinement at the most joyous season of the year. She remains sitting upon her eggs, apparently without the slightest wish to leave them, when blossoming trees, and forests bursting into leaf, seem to invite her abroad. "For my own part," says Paley, "I never see a bird on her nest without recognizing an invisible hand, detaining the contented prisoner from the fields and woods for a purpose the most important, the most beneficial." But at length the period of her happiness commences, and the young birds emerge from out their small and delicate shells. Then it is that anxiety and fatigue seem in a moment to be forgotten. And what a noble principle is natural affection, thus powerfully implanted in these timid birds! How carefully do they feed their young, now flying to the woods, and searching diligently in the bark of old trees for insect food; now skimming over the surface of the water in quest of flies; now peeping into the corolla of flowers and again turning aside the leaves to see what creeping things are concealed beneath them! But in all such movements one sole object is kept in view, namely, that of providing for their helpless charge. And when again returning to their nests, how fondly do they caress the inmates with affectionate notes, lull and quiet them with their tender parental voices, as wrote the natural historian Derham, put food into their bills, cherish and keep the "wee things" warm, and in a word, perform the part of

nurses, deputed by the Lord and Preserver of the universe to guard such young and helpless creatures!

Nor is this all. Each parent bird teaches his family to sing, and very pretty it is to hear the young ones commence their faltering, imperfect strains, which grow clearer and louder by degrees, till they can no longer be distinguished from the rest; and such among them as are pre-eminent for their melody do not attain their wild and delicate modulations without considerable practice. Miss M. J. Graham, to whom we are indebted for a Musical Tract of great merit, speaks of a Thrush who used to sing near her window, while confined to her bed at that joyous season when birds are in full song; and whose skill exceeded that of his feathered brethren. Every morning the invalid listened for his voice, which uniformly preceded the matins of all other birds. He opened his rehearsal with a number of wild trills and calls, which although very sweet and cheering could not be understood: and he would pause between each, till a soft response was heard from some distant bough. But when he seemed to have fixed upon a little cadence which pleased him, it became a more serious occupation. Strange to say, Miss Graham could always tell when this would be, for what pleased her particularly was sure to please him, so true it is that nature has given the same perception to man and birds. He would chant it over in a low tone two or three times, as if to make himself sure of it; then he carolled it with triumphant glee; and then suddenly stopped short, as much as to say to his rivals "which of you can imitate my strains?" During these little intervals answering notes sounded most sweet at various distances, but the songsters seemed conscious of inferiority to the master bird, who would suddenly break forth into the same melody, upon which he seemed to have been musing all the while, enriching it by some little note or trill, the wildest and most touching that ever came into a Thrush's heart. "I needed," said the interesting narrator of this little incident, "neither concert nor music-master, while listening to the untaught but not unpremeditated harmony of this original professor; nor could I quarrel with the sickness which had been the means of developing another link in that mysterious chain which

binds me to the rest of creation, by opening my ear and heart more than ever to the language of universal nature."

RED-START—*Motacilla Phœnicurus*, Lin.

The Red-Start may be readily distinguished from all other birds by the whiteness of his forehead, while the cheeks and throat, front and sides of the neck, are jet black; by the glowing red of the breast and sides; and feathers of the tail inclining to orange, excepting the two middle ones, which are brown, as also by the beautiful appearance of the under surface, relieved with white. The female, on the contrary, differs considerably from the male, being invested with sober plumes; and herein we may observe a wonderful provision for her security. Divested of those brilliant hues which adorn her companion, she sits securely on her nest, assimilating not unfrequently in colour with the leaves or creeping plants by which she is surrounded.

Frequenting old walls and deserted ruins, the Red-Start often places her nest in crannies worn by time or the rage of war. And there, with the lone wall-flower or dandelion, friends of greatness in decay, waving before the entrance of her nest, she deposits four or five eggs, not much unlike those of the Hedge Sparrow, but somewhat longer: and when her young are hatched she procures for them the eggs of ants, small berries, and soft fruit; spiders which spin their webs among the ruins; and flies, resorting in myriads to suck the sweet juices that exude from the flowers of the ivy, which enwraps the ruined wall or tower with its dark green drapery.

"From a ruin thou art singing,
Oh! lonely, lonely bird!
The soft air is ringing,
By thy summer music stirr'd;
Though the castle echoes catch no tone
Of human step or word;
Though the fire be quench'd and the feasting done,
Oh! lonely, lonely bird!

How can that flood of gladness
Rush through the fiery lay,
From the haunted place of sadness,
From the bosom of decay?

Where dirge-notes in the breezes moan,
Through the ivy garland heard,
Come blent with thy rejoicing tone,
Oh! lonely, lonely bird!

There's many a heart, wild singer,
Like thy forsaken tower,
Where joy no more may linger,
Where Love hath left his bower;
And there's many a spirit e'en like thee,
To mirth as lightly stirr'd,
Though it soar from ruins in its glee,
Oh! lonely, lonely bird!"—MRS. HEMANS.

Those who visit such deserted places may readily distinguish the male Red-Start, not only by his plumage, but the quick shaking of his tail from side to side, when alighting on a wall. And yet though generally affecting the most solitary places, preferring even high beetling crags that overhang the ocean, and the topmost branches of high trees, this bird is often seen amid the din and stir of great cities, looking placidly down from some old church tower; or trees that recall the memory of homes, and pleasant fields, to many a weary and wayworn passenger.

WHITE-THROAT—*Motacilla Sylva*, Lin.

Woods and thickly-tangled hedgerows, where the wild-rose and honeysuckle droop in gay luxuriance, are the favourite resort of the White-throat, of which the reddish colour of the head and back, the silvery white of the breast and throat, and under surface, distinguish him from all other birds. Feeding on insects and wild berries, his simple nest is constructed where both can readily be obtained; and hence in April the White-throat may be seen flying in and out among the bushes, with dry grass or moss in his bill, and occasionally a lock of wool which the friendly brambles have stolen from off a fleece, with which to line his nest; and therein the female deposits five eggs of a greenish white, sprinkled with dark spots.

The note of this solitary bird is somewhat harsh and unpleasant, and is attended with a peculiar movement of the wings; he excites in consequence little notice, and passes his time unregarded among low bushes and hedge-

rows, flying in and out, and producing that pleasing effect which moving objects uniformly impart where all else is still. Regarded in this view, even the unassuming Whitethroat conduces to the universal harmony of nature; all winged insects likewise, with bees and butterflies, cheer those lonely places, and give to them a character of life and animation in sultry months, when little if any air is stirring, and the branches of forest trees are scarcely seen to move. Who does not remember, when walking by the margin of a scarcely moving stream, bordered with bullrushes and tall sedges, the pleasure which the rapid evolutions of a company of Swallows, skimming over the surface in quest of insects, have afforded him?—

> "Or when swift rings
> Of mazy insects o'er the shallow tide
> Seem as they glance to scatter sparks of light
> From burnished films. Or when a silvery line
> Of gossamer, most tremulously hung
> Across the narrow current, from the tuft
> Of hazels to the hoary poplar's bough,
> Quivers and glistens with each faintest gale,
> Yet breaking not."—HEMANS.

YELLOW WILLOW-WREN—*Motacilla trochilus*, Lin.

Ever welcome to the shores of Britain is the Yellow Willow-Wren, with a yellow vestment, inclining to pale olive, having above each eye a whitish streak, and dusky brown tail, singing most sweetly on the topmost branch of a tall tree, from whence, as if too low for the expanding and soaring gladness of his heart, he often springs from off the branches, and rises warbling into mid air. And those who pass beneath the tree whereon the Yellow Willow-Wren thus delights to warble may be assured that his mate is not far distant, and that his nest, curiously wrought of moss, and arched somewhat like the Wren's, is either in some hollow at the root of that tall tree, or else in an adjacent bank. And very pleasant it is to hear this fond bird, while warbling in some spot accordant with his melody, where the dash of a lonely rill, or the gentle rustling of foliage shaken by the wind, are the only sounds that disturb its silence. When the sweet wild note of that

charming songster is heard, the listener does not feel alone, though all sounds of busy life are far away. The strain may awaken, perchance, within him remembrances of his own home, and the thought may not unaptly arise, whether, like that small bird, he seeks to gladden the hearts of those around him.

"Upon yon tuft of hazel trees,
That twinkle to the gusty breeze,
Behold him perch'd in ecstasies,
Yet seeming still to hover;
There! where the flutter of his wings
Upon his back and body flings
Shadows and sunny glimmerings,
That cover them all over.

While thus before my eyes he gleams,
A brother of the leaves he seems,
When in a moment forth he teems
His little song in gushes;
As if it pleas'd him to disdain
The voiceless form he chose to feign,
While he was dancing with the train
Of leaves among the bushes."—WORDSWORTH.

The Common Willow-Wren may next be mentioned, *Le Figuier brun et jaune* of Buffon. The feathers of the wings are brown, with light yellowish edges; the back, throat, and breast white, with a tinge of yellow; and over each eye extends a light yellow line, from the bill to the back of the head. A joyous bird is this same Willow-Wren, though loving sheltered valleys and quiet stream banks; singing blithely immediately after his arrival, and making those lonely places glad. He seems not to be wearied with the length of the way, nor yet regretful of the citrons or the myrtles of more favoured regions, but, like true contentment, rejoicing in the good that is before him, and filling the woods with his melodious minstrelsy. Small insects are his food; and he may be seen till the beginning of August running nimbly up and down the branches of trees, searching the bark, and scanning every opening flower with an eager eye, or darting in and out among low bushes and hedgerows in quest of food. Among these he helps to build his nest; and while his feathery dame

is sitting, he cheers her with his sweet and plaintive note.

Scarcely may the prying schoolboy discover the nest of this small bird, when, having selected the finest mosses, she weaves them carefully together, and constructs an arched dwelling, like that of the Common Wren, in some hollow of nature's making, or beneath thickly tangled roots, such as are often seen in rocky lanes, curiously interlaced together:

> "No tool had she who wrought, no knife to cut,
> No nail to fix, no bodkin to insert,
> No glue to join; her little beak was all;
> And yet how nicely finished! What neat hand,
> With every implement, and means to boot,
> Could make me such another? Fondly then
> We boast of excellence, whose noblest skill
> Instinctive genius foils."—HURDIS.

The beautifully constructed nest of a small bird is one of the most curious objects in creation. Though destitute of all means by which art worketh her wonders, with no other implements than the feet or bill, do the industrious artificers exhibit the correctness of the architect, the ingenuity of the basket-maker, and the industry of the mason. With what admirable precision a variety of sticks and straws, shivers of bark, thorns or reeds, thick hay or moss, are laid together, and entwined with inimitable care into warm and commodious cradles! Thus wrote the natural historian Ray, when referring to the exquisite formation of a nest. And where among the most elaborate productions of imitative art can specimens be found more admirable than one such cradle, whether constructed by the Willow-Wren, the Goldfinch, the Long-tailed Titmouse, or the Chaffinch? Fairy wigwams may such nests be called, that especially of the Willow-Wren, which, like her neighbour the Long-tailed Titmouse, thatches her dwelling with a double layer of leaves and moss, with so much skill, that the rain trickles off without incommoding the occupants.

With the Willow-Wren, as with most other birds, the construction of a nest is equally the work of both parents; but all the pleasing cares of home belong to the female; hers is the confinement of the nest, and to her devolves

the care of the young brood. Her mate meanwhile sits on some near spray, warbling his sweetest notes; and either accompanying her during the brief space when she flies abroad, or taking her place upon the nest. But while continuing to watch and sing, he fills the forest with his melody, and when his voice is heard his companion fears no danger; but if a footstep approaches, suddenly his song is hushed, and she, crouching down in her nest, listens with a beating heart, till her mate resumes his song:

"Ah! we shall miss thy voice, my bird!
Under our whispering pine;
Music shall 'midst the leaves be heard,
But not a song like thine."—HEMANS.

NIGHTINGALE—*Motacilla luscinia.*

Who is this that wings her way from the land of roses and acacias, where the myrtle and magnolia mingle their beauty and their fragrance—that small bird, of which the back and wing are brown, tinged with an olive hue, and the under surface of a pale ash colour? That bird is the Nightingale, offspring of a glowing clime, inhabiting at all seasons the groves of Persia, China, and Japan, yet loving to roam abroad, and making even the glens of Sweden and Siberia cheerful with her melodious minstrelsy, waking in the heart of many a lone exile thoughts too deep for tears:

"In her sweetest, saddest plight,
Smoothing the rugged brow of night,
While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke,
Gently o'er the accustom'd oak:
Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,
Most musical, most melancholy!
Thee, chantress, oft the woods among,
I woo to hear thy evening song;
And missing thee, I walk unseen
On the dry smooth-shaven green,
To behold the wandering moon,
Riding near her highest noon,
Like one that has been led astray
Through the heavens' wide pathless way;
And oft as if her head she bow'd,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud."—*Il Penseroso.*

Strange it seems that the warm breezes of Devonshire, and myrtles that blossom in the open air, glens full of beauty and repose, and clear streamlets sounding through green fields, have no charm for this enchanting songstress —that the meadows are without cowslips, and the groves uncheered by music which the warbling lute may not imitate.

The arrival of the Nightingale in Britain announces the leafing of the elm and quince, the white-thorn, apple and cherry; the budding of the hornbeam and willow. Among old ruins and heaps of stone spring up the dandelion and feverfew, the houndstongue and wall-flower. Beside streamlets and in meadows appear the herb-Robert, golden saxifrage, cuckoo-flower, and yellow rattle. In glades open to the sun the beautiful wood anemone, white briony, and white sorrel are seen peeping forth from among the moss; and along the roadside the spurge and holly, furze and broom, delight the passer-by with their cheerful and varied tints.

Often amid the wildest solitudes of nature is heard the song of the Nightingale, warbling where all else is still; beginning at first with a low and timid note, as if preparing for his glorious descant by essaying his powers of melody. Listen! By degrees the sound opens and swells; it bursts forth with loud and brilliant intonation. Again, flowing with smooth rapidity, it grows faint, and a low murmur is heard. Then it rises as if with increasing strength. Again the musician seems to shake with emotion, and the soft breathings of love and joy are poured forth. Scarcely does the listener allow himself to breathe, lest he should lose aught of that rich melody, now deep and flowing, and such as finds a response in the inmost feelings of the heart; and now a pause, when the rushing of the far-off stream is heard, and the rustling of the night wind among the trees. Again the song bursts forth, richer, deeper, more full if possible of thrilling melody; and well may he, who listens in the solemn hours at which that lone bird sings, be ready to exclaim, "Lord, what music hast thou provided for thy saints in heaven, when thou givest to man such music upon earth!"

"At that calm hour, so still, so pale,
Awakes the joyous nightingale;
And from a hermitage of shade
Fills with her voice the forest glade.

And sweeter far that melting voice
Than all which through the day rejoice;
And still shall bard and wand'rer love
The twilight music of the grove.

Father in heaven! oh! thus when day
With all its cares hath pass'd away,
And silent hours waft peace on earth,
And hush the louder strains of mirth,

Thus may sweet songs of praise and prayer
To Thee my spirit's offering bear;
Yon star, my signal, set on high,
For vesper hymns of piety.

So may Thy mercy and Thy power
Protect me through the midnight hour;
And balmy sleep and visions blest
Smile on thy servant's bed of rest."—HEMANS.

CUCKOO—*Cuculus Canorus*, Lin.

"The cuckoo's one word spoken
Through the length of a summer day,
Doth seem of joy the token
That shall never pass away."

The return of this sober-vested bird is everywhere welcomed. "She has no sadness in her song, no winter in her year," and she seems to inspire with a sympathetic gladness all who listen to her voice. During the winter months the note of the confiding Robin is only heard at intervals, or the sweet complaining voice of the Grey Wren, unless on some mild morning, when the Woodlark, as if forgetful of the season, breaks into a song. All other musicians are either silent or have departed to distant lands; but when the voice of the returning Cuckoo is heard in our meadows, we welcome it with a delight that no other can awaken; it comes upon us as

"A sudden thrill, a joyous thought,
A feeling many a day forgot."

Yet it is neither melody nor cadence that so charms us in the voice of this bird; its simple reiterated note cannot compete with the rich mellifluous tones of the Blackbird, with the warbling of the Canary; the Skylark's note of joy, or the loud clear pipe of the Black-Cap. No; it is the hearing once again that dear voice, which seems the earnest of opening flowers and bright days, of flying clouds, warm gleams of sunshine, and all those indefinable delights which cling around our hearts in childhood.

Strange it seems that a single, monotonous, often repeated word should thus delight us. Yet so it is. The power of association is inexplicable; it seems to grapple the mind with bands viewless, and yet strong as iron. Travellers in far off lands speak of the Cuckoo's voice as affecting them most deeply, and bringing before the mental view, in all their vividness and bitterness, thoughts of friends and home. Carlisle, the celebrated traveller, when hearing a Cuckoo sing in the valley of St. Saba, near Jerusalem, thus embodied the feelings which that note awakened in his mind:—

"Lights still more loved my eyes beguile;
I see each face my heart holds dear—
See friendship's warm unconscious smile,
And love's repress'd but bursting tear:
To meet the fond embrace I fly,
I rush to seize the outstretched hand:
Ah! why will truth intruding cry,
Thou tread'st a distant, dreary land!"

Another traveller, on the contrary, who explored the wildest portions of Kamtschatka and Siberia, wandering from one valley to another, among rocks capped with eternal snow, having lost his way, and experiencing the utmost difficulties, spoke in other terms of the effect produced on his mind, and that of his companions, by the cheerful voice of the Cuckoo. "It gladdened our hearts," he said, "and cheered us when hope was about to part. It seemed like a voice sounding as by some magical influence from home; and while it told us of the parent roofs which had sheltered us, and the green fields that lay around, it told also that parents and friends expected us. And very often, when ready to faint with the difficulties of the way,

and it seemed as if we must lie down and perish, that voice sounded out again from the deep of some ravine, and thus encouraged, we still pressed on."

The Cuckoo appears in Britain on or about the 17th of April, and makes a shorter stay than any other bird of passage. But in Sweden, where the seasons are later and proportionally colder, the Cuckoo does not arrive so early, at least by one month. There she announces that the season for sowing barley and garden seeds is come, that the sorrel and the birch, the barberry and the osier are already in full leaf. But whether she departs, either from Sweden or this country, is unknown. Some conjecture that she secludes herself in a hollow tree, others that she wings her flight to a warmer climate; but England is her favourite resort, and her voice is heard here longer than elsewhere.

This welcome bird has been accused of wanting natural affection. One naturalist has related to another that her heart is hardened against her young, as though they were not hers. Yet Pennant, and with him Selborne's charming historian, has cleared her from this unjust aspersion. They tell us that the Cuckoo does not deposit her eggs indiscriminately in the nest of the first bird that comes in her way, but that she chooses as a foster nurse some bird of similar habits, with which to entrust her young—evidently because a soft-billed nursling, with a thin membraneous stomach suited to soft viands, could not subsist on the same food as a hard-billed bird that feeds on grain and pease; and with some such nursing mother as a Tit Lark, White Throat, or Hedge Sparrow, she safely leaves her egg or young when about to depart for other climes.

The Cuckoo is too well known to require a particular description; little, if any difference of colour subsists between the male and female.

Flying hither and thither—now over gardens, where immediately every one looks round, and children begin to run and mimic his joyous "one word spoken," in the gladness of their hearts—now perched for a moment, his voice is heard from some tall tree in the village, and then old people hasten to their windows, and young ones rush to the door, and one neighbour congratulates another as if good news had come by the post that day. Again,

when the sun shines bright, you may hear the Cuckoo in the depth of some green valley, where a streamlet, till lately frost bound, flashes and sparkles along its pebbly bed, and the hawthorn begins to blossom.

Often, when listening to his welcome note, amid the beautiful glens and glades that surround my far off home, filled with sheep and watered with prattling rills, beside which the snow-drop and golden-leaved saxifrage look down upon clear waters that flow beside them, and here and there advance a little forward from the banks, as if loving their own reflection, have I repeated the exquisite production of the poet Logan :—

"Hail, beauteous stranger of the grove,
Thou messenger of spring,
Now heaven repairs thy rural haunts,
And woods thy welcome sing!

What time the daisy decks the green,
Thy certain voice we hear;
Hast thou a star to guide thy path,
Or mark the rolling year?

The schoolboy wandering through the wood,
To pull the primrose gay,
Starts the new voice of spring to hear,
And imitates thy lay.

Sweet bird, thy bower is ever green,
Thy sky is ever clear;
Thou hast no sorrow in thy song,
No winter in thy year.

O could I fly, I'd fly with thee,
And make, with joyous wing,
Our annual visit o'er the globe,
Companions of the spring."

GRASSHOPPER-LARK—*Alauda trivialis*, Lin.

Haunting among green leaves and hedges, while as yet the hawthorn has scarcely put forth her blossoms, this joyous bird delights in the showery April. She builds her nest upon the ground in solitary places, and not unfrequently conceals it beneath a turf. Very difficult is it, therefore, to find that nest with its five small eggs, marked

with brown at the upper end, and equally so to distinguish the occupant when flitting among the bushes, for the upper part is of a greenish colour, variegated and mixed with brown, the under of a yellowish white, the feathers of the wings and tail of a dusky hue with light edges, the legs of a pale dusky brown. When the bird, therefore, remains stationary, it is scarcely possible to find her among the green leaves and white blossoms of the sheltering hawthorn. And while his companion sits closely on her eggs, the Grasshopper-Lark amuses her with singing on some contiguous bough. At intervals he rises to a considerable height, soaring and warbling for a few minutes, then dropping suddenly on the same bough without interrupting his clear and melodious song.

And yet, though possessing considerable powers of melody, the voice of the Grasshopper-Lark occasionally resembles that of the creature from whence he derives a name. Nothing can be more amusing than the chirping of this bird, which seems close at hand, though perhaps a hundred yards distant, and when really near, is scarcely any louder than when a great way off. Persons who are unacquainted with insects, and do not know that the Grasshopper kind are not hatched when the Grasshopper-Lark appears in Britain, would suppose that a locusta was whispering in the hedges. Country people laugh when you tell them that it is the note of a bird; for the artful creature, skulking in the thickest part of a bush, will continue to utter his soft cry, if well concealed from view. In order to ascertain the fact, you may go to the side of a hedge and drive out the bird, if possible; but the wary Lark will run at least a hundred yards among the thorns, creeping like a mouse, and though constantly disturbed, will not forsake the covert, and when skulking close to the ground it is scarcely possible to distinguish him.

Two subjects for thought are elicited by this bird: one is that admirable adaptation of colour to locality observable in most defenceless creatures, the other those modulations of song which he possesses in common with his kind. In the Grasshopper-Lark the brown and yellow, which assimilates him with the bush in which he loves to hide, is most remarkable, and he is hence enabled to elude

the pursuit of his enemies. Sitting quietly among the grass or moss, or variously tinted leaves, scarcely may the prying naturalist discover him, and if seen for a moment he quickly and quietly changes his place, and again eludes his pursuer. This arrangement of colours, which happily assimilates the Grasshopper-Lark to the places wherein he finds either food or repose, is obvious likewise in other species. Thus the Wryneck is scarcely to be distinguished from the bark on which he feeds, or the Snipe from the soft and mossy ground or the margin of running streams which he frequents. The Great Plover finds his security in stony places to which his colours are so nicely adapted that the most exact observer scarcely discovers him. The Quail and Partridge, in like manner, often remain concealed among the corn or underwood to which their sober vestments assimilate them.

Those who have lived from childhood in the country distinguish the song of birds, and speak of them as varying both in their compass and intonation; and here, though equally applying to all singing birds, the mention of the Grasshopper-Lark may lead us to consider that the Creator of the universe has not confined His care to man alone, as regards the power of giving utterance both to joy and sorrow. Birds are, doubtless, able to communicate one with the other, and their songs are readily understood by their companions. Yonder little bird, it may be, whether a Goldfinch, Throstle, or Grasshopper-Lark, is warbling near his nest; his song is evidently both joyous and triumphant, the language of conjugal affection, designed to soothe the weary hours spent in sitting by his feathery dame, or to delight the young birds when hatched. But some step approaches, in a moment a warning cry succeeds, and his song is hushed. Listen a few minutes, and when the intruder is gone, again the song commences, at first cautiously, with peculiar inflections, and then more cheerfully, till at length he gives full utterance to the overflowing of his gladness. Thus the mother bird, when danger menaces her young, utters the most piercing cries: and the intonations of barn-door fowls are as varied as the circumstances that call them forth. Birds, therefore, have the power of communicating with one another by means of a natural language

adapted to their restricted sphere of being. In that of the Nightingale and Thrush, according to the interesting observations of Dr. Macculloch, we distinguish numerous sounds and articulations which belong to a musical scale for which our sense of hearing is adapted. But in the melody of these first-rate musicians, and still more in that of birds whose tones are less musical and definite, notes there are which we cannot readily distinguish, and therefore neglect in favour of such as are more obvious. Yet such notes are, doubtless, full of meaning, and there is no difficulty in believing that the song of the Nightingale contains far more than is conveyed to our minds, and that the same sweet song is fraught with interest to the bird which utters them, and to his tribe. Persons who have attended to the song of birds well know that among the musicians of our woods apparent debates, and those of considerable length, are carried on in tones distinct from their ordinary songs. Their language is undoubtedly restricted, because occupying a comparatively narrow sphere, but the necessity of communication exists, and is called out by conflicting circumstances, and this faculty contributes greatly to the happiness and security of aërial natures. In the gregarious tribes, or such as live in communities, it assumes a more enlarged character, at one time expressive of hope and confidence, at another of anxiety and distrust; conveying at one time the knowledge of facts connected with obtaining food, at another directions to the young and less experienced, promoting therefore the well being of the whole community. Hence, the language of Ducks, while urging their broods to fly or dive, is varied with the most extraordinary sounds. Geese, when setting forth on their distant migrations, make the rocks resound with various cries; and occasionally, in a rookery, the destruction of a nest, and even the killing of its occupant, is preceded by the gathering together of the whole community with great noise, and all who are conversant with the internal policy of a rookery well know, that the punishment is executed by a deputation of two or three individuals.

Such are the reflections to which the mention of the Grasshopper Lark has given rise.

FAUVETTE-PETTICHAPS—*Motacilla hippolais*, Lin.

Length about six inches; bill blackish; eyes hazel; upper part of the body dark brown or mouse-coloured, lightly tinged with pale brown on the edges of the wing coverts, and the webs of the secondary quills; larger quills dusky ash colour, as also those of the tail, except the outermost, which are white on the exterior tips and sides; over each eye is a pale streak; throat and belly silvery white; legs dark brown.

Few comparatively have seen this charming little bird, though many have heard him sing delightfully in some covert close at hand, and yet contriving to elude the sight of the most observant. Naturalists often watch for him with the utmost attention, and are as frequently disappointed.

The tribe of which the Fauvette may be considered as the head arrives in England towards the latter end of April. They disperse over all parts of the island; and while some of the least timid prefer gardens, where they often sing in the midst of rose-trees, others resort to clumps, and a few conceal themselves among the reeds and sedges; others, again, delight in woodlands, for the Fauvette of which we speak is the member of a numerous tribe, consisting of ten distinct species, many of which visit this country at uncertain periods, and are confessedly the most obscure and undetermined by ornithologists.

Very amusing it is to stand by a shady and closely-tangled covert, the haunt of the Fauvette, when that bird begins his song, for his imitative power embraces all notes and melodies, from the short shrill cry of the Swallow to the Blackbird's full tide of song. At one time the listener wonders to hear that peculiar note which is associated with summer clouds, and the azure of the heavens, and the rapid motions of joyous hirundines sounding from out the coverts; he fears lest some poor wounded swallow should have fallen into the bush, and that, impatient for his soaring flight, he utters the note in his bewilderment that was wont to express his joy. In a moment the Goldfinch's song is heard; and then the Throstle bodies forth her gladness; and the voice of the Lark, when soaring upwards, is strangely heard in

that low bush. To this succeeds the short and sweetly-varied song of the Willow-Wren, and the deep loud wild pipe of the Black-Cap; but this is not extraordinary, for such birds frequent low bushes. Then again bursts forth the gladsome chant of the warbling Linnet, and the full melody of the Thrush and Blackbird; then a pause, a quiver, as if to give time for the listener to breathe, and then again such entrancing melody that he who listens thinks of the greenwood haunts which he loved in childhood, and of friends whom, perhaps, he may behold no more.

"Thou art a thing on our dreams to rise,
'Midst the echoes of long-lost melodies,
And to fling bright dew from the morning back,
Fair bird! on each image of childhood's track.

Thou art a thing to recall the hours
When the love of our souls was on leaves and flowers;
When a world was our own in some dim sweet grove,
And treasure untold in one captive dove."—HEMANS.

CORN-CRAKE, LAND-RAIL, OR DAKER-HEN—*Rallus crex*, Lin.

Hark to the cry of the Corn-Crake, from among long grass waving in the wind, with its tall moorflowers and bright crimson sorrel. At one moment the cry seems near, at another it is heard at the furthest end of the field; at another a rapid undulation of the corn or herbage shows that the Corn-Crake is changing her place: but this is rarely perceptible; for the creature, as if aware of danger, skulks among the thickest part of the herbage, and runs so nimbly and yet lightly, winding and doubling in all directions, that it is very difficult to follow her movements, or to distinguish the gentle rustling which they occasion from the waving of herbage or ears of corn occasioned by the breeze of summer. When hard pressed by her pursuers, the Corn-Crake often stops short, and squats down; by which means the too eager sportsman overshoots the place, and loses all trace of his intended victim. And very needful to this defenceless bird is the instinct of self-preservation with which she is endowed, and the cautious ways which she is observed to practise;

for the same field with its long grass and flowers contains her nest, the circle of all her joys or cares. It is simply constructed of a little moss and dry grass, carelessly put together; but then it is her home, dear to her as the curiously constructed and pendent nest of the exotic Oriole, and over it she watches with unremitting attention. The eggs are of a pale ash colour, marked with rusty-looking spots; and scarcely have the young Crakes — attired in black down, and with quick eyes glaring in all directions — emerged from their shells than they run after their mother, and seem to partake of her wariness and celerity. Very rarely, perhaps even never, except in cases of great danger will the parent birds spring from cover; when this occurs they fly with their legs hanging down, but seldom to a great distance; and if so fortunate as to escape the shot of the fowler, they presently alight and run off with such celerity that before he has time to reach the spot they are already at a considerable distance.

Scarcely have the frosts of autumn begun to whiten our fields, and slugs and small insects to burrow in the ground, than Corn-Crakes depart in quest of food. But whither they wing their flight is unknown, as also the country whence they come. Far distant we may conjecture it to be, for these birds, on their first coming, seldom weigh more than six ounces, but such as are taken before their departure not unfrequently exceed eight.

The arrival of this migratory species, with all such as visit the country during April, is somewhat regulated by the weather. When unusually severe, their setting forth is deferred; but in general they instinctively observe the allotted period, and scarcely swerve from the week or even day when they are expected.

MAY.

NIGHT-JAR, GOAT-SUCKER, DOR-HAWK, OR FERN-OWL—*Caprimulgus Europæus.*

The length of this bird is about ten inches and a half; the bill is small, flat, and somewhat hooked, furnished on

either side the upper mandible with strong bristles, whereby to secure his prey; the lower jaw is edged with a white stripe, extending backwards towards the head; the eyes are large, full, and black; the plumage beautifully freckled, and powdered with brown of various hues, with rust colour and white. The male is distinguished by an oval white spot on the inner web of the three first quill feathers, and at the end of the two outermost feathers of the tail; the legs are short, rough, and scaly, feathered below the knee; the toes connected by a membrane far as the first joint; the middle claw is considerably larger than the rest, and serrated on one side.

These wandering birds are seen throughout the continents of the Old World, from among the eternal snows of Siberia to the glowing regions of the Line. They affect moors and heathy tracts where the ferns grow wild and high, as also the borders of extensive forests: their two or three eggs of a dull white, spotted with brown, are deposited on the ground, and there the parent birds patiently await the coming forth of their callow brood.

Waterton tells us that this harmless bird has been unjustly aspersed ever since the days of Aristotle; that one naturalist has copied from the writings of another the injurious assertion of his being a nocturnal thief, one who subsists by milking the flocks. "Poor innocent bird of night! how sadly hast thou suffered, and how vile a stain has inattention to facts thrown on thy character! Thou hast never robbed man of any part of his property, or deprived the kid of a drop of milk."

When the moon shines bright you may judge of this statement for yourself. You will see the goatsucker, as he is most unfairly termed, close by the goats, cows, and sheep, jumping up every now and then. Approach a little nearer, he is not shy: he fears no danger, for he is doing nothing wrong. Observe how the nocturnal flies are tormenting the poor sleepy creatures, and with what dexterity he springs up, and catches them as fast as they alight. Look how quietly the animals remain, and how sensible they seem of his good offices; for they neither rise as if offended, nor do such as stand attempt to kick, or hit at him with their tails, or tread upon him as an uncivil intruder. Were you to dissect him and examine his

stomach, you would find no milk there—it is full of flies that have been annoying the herd.

A naturalist relates that he once saw this nocturnal bird in a solitary glen, when the cheerful voices of all other birds were hushed, and a few stars were dimly visible in the immensity of space; when that peculiar disposition of the earth with regard to the sun produces a pleasant degree of twilight which banishes the darkness that would otherwise prevail, and continues till the dawn of day. He was perched on the stem of a tree with the head lower than the tail, and so intent was he in uttering his strange sound, that a sensible vibration was perceptible in the bough; and yet the sound, though unmeaning to him who heard it, resembling a loud spinning-wheel, was doubtless very pleasant to himself, and fraught with interest to the ears for which it was intended.

Like the Owl, this bird is seldom seen in the day-time, unless disturbed from his favourite haunt, though occasionally wandering forth when the weather is dark and gloomy, and his eyes are not liable to be affected by the bright rays of the sun. Insects which he catches on the wing are his usual food; and hence he is a great destroyer of the Cockchafer or Dor-beetle, which has given rise to the cognomen of Dor-hawk. White of Selborne notices, in his very interesting memorandums, having watched to great advantage the motions of this bird while playing round a large oak that swarmed with cockchafers, one moment wheeling in quick succession, at another diving rapidly in quest of prey, and rising again as suddenly. More than once his short leg was darted forth, and while the head was bent towards it, something was given into the bill. From this movement it was evident that an insect was taken in the creature's rapid flight; and hence the singular construction of the middle toe, which is furnished with a serrated claw.

No particulars have been ascertained with regard to the future sojourn of the Goatsucker when leaving this country in autumn.

"O lover of the twilight, hail!
Say to what deep and pathless vale,
Mid forest dark of aged oak
Ne'er echoing with the woodman's stroke,

Where Nature seems to sit alone,
Majestic on a craggy throne,
And nibbling flocks and herds are seen
To wander mid the pathless scene,
Dost thou on rapid pinions haste,
When summer's gladsome months are past?"

M. ROBERTS.

SPOTTED FLY-CATCHER, BEAM-BIRD—*Muscicapa Grisola*, Lin.

The length of the Spotted Fly-catcher is about five inches and three quarters; the bill dusky, whitish at the base, and beset with short bristles; head and back light brown, obscurely spotted with black; wings dusky, edged with white; breast and under surface white; throat and sides, and beneath the wings, tinged with red; the tail dusky; legs black.

As the Fly-catcher is of all our summer birds the most silent and familiar, he is also the latest; visiting this island about the 12th of May, and departing in September. His nest, constructed chiefly of moss and twine, is placed in a vine or sweet briar, against the wall of a house, and often close to the door, where people are going in and out all the day long. It may be seen occasionally on the end of a beam, or in the hole of a wall, containing four or five rusty spotted eggs; and wherever the Fly-catcher rears her young, thither she returns again, if possible, year after year. But no sooner are the younglings able to fly, than she forsakes with them the sheltering vine or sweet briar, and hastens to some near wood or group of trees, where the parent birds may be seen sporting with them among the higher branches, or darting after the insects that hum below. Their notes are low and inward, and somewhat wailing, and are rarely uttered unless fearful for their young, when perchance a cat or schoolboy approaches too near the nest.

Those who like to observe the nimble movements of small birds may please themselves with looking at the graceful evolutions of the Fly-catcher, when catching his insect food upon the wing. Watching from the branch of some near tree, or sitting, as if regardless of all external

objects, on a post, and yet intent on the winged creatures that are floating round; scarcely does a fly approach than the Fly-catcher darting from his place, seizes it with a strong hold, and quickly returns again. Cherries are likewise a favourite food, and hence this active bird is called in Kent the Cherry-sucker.

Two only among the numerous tribe of Fly-catchers are seen in Britain—the Spotted Fly-catcher, of which mention has been made, and the Pied, which remains stationary; and although by no means common, is seen most frequently in the woods of Yorkshire, and the wildest parts of Lancashire and Derbyshire, whose streamlets, shaded with high trees, are the resort of innumerable insects.

The active race to which these dissimilar birds belong are continually occupied, as their names imply, in keeping down the redundancy of insect life. They are mostly restricted to hot countries, where their services are invaluable in destroying those numerous swarms which, springing to life under the influence of heat and moisture, are continually on the wing. These, though weak and powerless when individually considered, are numerically formidable, devouring every green thing; and unless kept in check by such birds as prey on insects, might occasion both famine and pestilence. Throughout the whole creation there is a wonderful adjustment of various parts, a mutual connexion and subordination, and unity of purpose.

Such are the migratory birds that visit Britain during the months of March, April, and May, and the services which they render. Their arrival is ever a subject of interest to those who live in the country, and the return of the Nightingale and Cuckoo, of the melodious Black-Cap and active hirundines, is everywhere welcome.

Without the means of moving rapidly from place to place, these changes could not be effected. Their Creator has, therefore, endowed the migratory species especially with facilities for conveying themselves very swiftly through the air, granting them also that extraordinary instinct by the aid of which they find their way without a chart or compass over wide oceans, and along pathless

skies. Such birds as migrate to a great distance are alone denominated birds of passage; but all are, less or more, accustomed to change their places of abode, either from one part of England to another, or from inland districts towards the shore.

Ever observant of the period assigned them, migratory birds announce, or else are welcomed by, the opening of wild flowers and the leafing of trees. They announce also the changes of the seasons, and the time of husbandry. Hence it grew into a proverb, that the kite governed Græcia because his appearance indicated the approach of spring; the Cuckoo all Egypt and Phœnicia, because the wheat and barley harvest awaited his welcome voice.

"O mortals! great blessings are derived from us."

Thus sung the bird of Aristophanes. "We announce to you the changes of the seasons, the approach of spring and summer, of autumn and winter. The Crane points out the time for sowing, when she flies with her warning voice into Egypt; she bids the sailor hang up his rudder and take his rest, and every prudent man to provide himself with winter garments. Next the Kite appears, and proclaims another season; she tells you that it is time to shear your sheep. After that, the Swallow counsels you that the air is beginning to grow chill."

JUNE.

Changes are now perceptible. The woods and fields, which resounded with harmony, are beginning to lose some of their sweetest minstrels. The Cuckoo's "one word spoken" has been hushed for some weeks. The sweet and plaintive note of the Middle Willow-Wren, the frequently repeated warble of the Chaffinch, the Red-Start's joyous song, and the Nightingale's rich and varied melody, have ceased, and already a feeling of desertion seems to steal over the once vocal meadows.

But whither, it may be asked, do those birds successively depart? Ornithologists who have paid the closest attention to this interesting subject decide that the mi-

grations of our summer birds of passage are uniformly directed either to Spain or Africa, and that from the former they spread over the warm portion of the European continent.

Gradually the weeks pass on, and our groves and meadows become still more silent. One by one they go, those joyous birds whose coming is everywhere delightful. The Nightingale and Cuckoo went away in July and August, the Wryneck and Willow Wren, the Black-Cap and Red-Start, the Grasshopper-Larks and Reed Sparrows, are now departed or departing. The hirundines are also on the move:

> "Warn'd of approaching winter, gather'd, play
> The Swallow people."

You may observe their clustering on the thatch or chimney of a cottage, or around the steeple of a church, where they sit as if in grave consultation, and a looker-on might fancy that some of the most experienced were giving their opinion. In a moment the whole assembly rise up with a sound of brushing wings, and away they fly, wheeling round in sportive circles, then darting to a distance, and returning to perch upon the roof. Thus they exercise their wings, and deliberate for several successive days: but notwithstanding all the attention which naturalists have paid, rising early and watching late, no one has yet been able to discover the actual period of their migration.

The arrival of birds of passage has been accurately noted, for the period of their coming is observed with equal punctuality and order. It is otherwise with the time of their going away; they depart secretly and in haste, and often so suddenly that those who have watched for their return see them no more. Their arrival, on the contrary, is announced by the joyful songs with which they bid good morrow to the woodlands; and when we hear no longer the pleasant voices of these welcome birds, we know that the little minstrels are about to go. Their departure is known rather by the ceasing of what has been, than any indications of their flight. But such is not the case with the Swallow people; they are too important

to be readily missed. But although no one has seen them depart, they have been met with, and that not unfrequently, far off on the briny sea. The master of a vessel, while sailing between the islands of Minorca and Majorca, saw a numerous company of Swallows flying northwards, many of which alighted on the rigging of his ship, but disappeared before morning. Voyagers relate that thousands arrive in Africa about the beginning of November, having accomplished their weary journey from the shores of Britain in about seven days. While thus proceeding, they often alight, when harassed with contending winds, on some friendly mast, faint and exhausted with fatigue, and after a short rest launch forth again; journeying without a guide or compass, with the rolling ocean beneath, and the immensity of space above, yet pursuing their distant course, and safely arriving at their appointed sojourn to return again when the storms of winter have passed by, and early flowers peep forth from among the grass.

SEPTEMBER.

REDWING, OR WIND-THRUSH—*Turdus Iliacus*, Lin.

This bird, precursor with his companions of changing skies, uniformly appears in the country a few days before Fieldfares. Their arrival announces that change of colour which renders September the painter's month. Leaves of the cherry become red, those of the willow hoary; the foliage of the oak and elm, the hawthorn, ash, and maple, assume different tints of yellow or orange. The leaves of the sycamore turn brown, the hazel yellow, the plane tawny. Thus blended, they present that exquisite variety of mingled hues, that melody of colours, which applies equally to the rich autumnal foliage of the woodlands, and to the colour of stones from which the waves have receded when shone upon by a bright sun. Similar in their habits to the Fieldfares, Redwings generally associate with them after their arrival, frequenting the same places, seeking the same food, and sitting frequently on the same

bough. Low and thickly-tangled bushes or hedges, over which the wild clematis has flung its hoary mantle, are the Redwing's favourite resort; and among these, when the autumn birds begin to build their nests, the female erects her domicile, and deposits within it six eggs of a greenish blue colour, spotted with black. Those who walk in the fields, and over commons covered with bushes, early in the spring, when winds are piping loud, relate that the song of the Redwing is very pleasing; but few comparatively have heard his melody, as the bird departs with his companions before the leaves begin to open.

So highly were the Redwings estimated by luxurious Romans, that thousands were kept in aviaries, and fed with a kind of paste, made of bruised eggs and flour, to improve their flavour. These aviaries were so constructed as barely to admit light sufficient to direct the captives to their food. The cheering sight of green trees and fields, even of the blue sky, their joyous home, through which they would have soared, was carefully excluded. The Romans well knew the effect of early associations and fond remembrances, even on the mind of a bird; and hence all such objects as tended to remind them of their former liberty were kept from view. These birds passed a kind of dreamy life, and fattened, to the great profit of their proprietors, who sold them at the enormous price of three denarii, or two shillings each.

The Redwing, in its native state, is about eight inches in length; the bill of a dark brown colour; eyes, deep hazel; plumage, similar to the Thrush, but a white streak over the eye distinguishes it from that bird; the under surface is not quite so much spotted; and the sides and feathers beneath the wing are tinged with red. This is the peculiar characteristic of the species, and gives rise to their cognomen.

FIELDFARE—*Turdus Pilaris*, Lin.

Fieldfares swarm in the woods of Russia, Siberia, and Kamtschatka; haunting equally the pine-woods of Poland, and building their nests in Sweden and Norway, where a considerable number remain stationary through the year.

But when such fruits and berries as furnish their daily fare begin to fail, the superabundant population, impelled by cold or hunger, pour forth from their northern haunts, and visit the Orkneys in their progress towards Britain, where they feed on the berries of different mountain plants; the juniper and mountain-ash, the bilberries and cranberry, as also such small slugs and earth-worms as are readily discovered. They reach this country about old Michaelmas, and leave it in the beginning of March on their way towards Syria, where they generally winter, and afterwards diverge to other lands, at more joyous seasons of the year, spending the summer in Northern Europe and Lower Austria.

The Fieldfare is a very transient visitant to this country, making his appearance about the beginning of October, in order to avoid the rigorous winters of the north. When arriving early, and in considerable numbers, the country people prognosticate an early winter, or its severity. But as soon as the snowdrop or fair maid of February is seen beside the streamlet, with the golden-leaved saxifrage, Fieldfares prepare to depart; and although no one has witnessed their going hence, their absence from their favourite haunts, and appearance a few days after in Sweden, Norway, and Russia, and even far north as Siberia and Kamtschatka, announces to the naturalist the places of their sojourn.

> "They are gone, all gone from the sunny hill,
> But the bird and the blue fly rove o'er it still;
> And the red deer bound in their gladness free,
> And the heath is bent by the singing bee,
> And the snow-drop unfolds her vest of snow
> Where the waters leap and the fresh winds blow."
>
> HEMANS.

Of mild and affectionate dispositions, they generally form numerous flocks, and though spreading over the plains and meadows in quest of food, they do not lose sight of one another; and if alarmed, they fly off and collect upon the same tree. The Fieldfare is somewhat less than the Missel Thrush, in length about ten inches. The bill is yellow, each corner of the mouth furnished with a few black bristly hairs; the eye light brown; the top of

the head and back of the neck of a light ash colour, the former spotted with black; back and coverts of the wings of a deep hoary brown; throat and breast yellow, with black spots; belly and thighs of a yellowish white; tail, brown, inclining to black; legs, dusky yellowish brown.

This friendly bird, which resembles in his general habits both the Thrush and Blackbird, never builds a nest in Britain, deeming, apparently, that even the cold and sequestered highlands are not congenial to his wishes. Nor is it less worthy of remark, that although the Fieldfare perches on trees during the daytime, and chiefly collects his food from among the white-thorns, and his nest in countries where he brings up his young is placed uniformly in a high tree, yet that with us he roosts upon the ground.

Flocks of Fieldfares may be seen at eventide, nestling among the heath. Hence those men who go in quest of larks, when dragging their nets by night, frequently catch them in the wheat stubbles. But fowlers, on the contrary, who capture many Redwings in the hedges, never entangle any of this species. But why these birds should differ from their congener in their mode of roosting, and from themselves in their haunts by day, is a fact for which no historian of nature has yet been able to account.

HOODED OR ROYSTON CROW—*Corvus Cornix.*

Few if any particulars have reached us concerning the habits of this bird. Arriving generally with the Woodcock, and frequenting the banks of rivers for some time after his coming over, he may be readily distinguished by the seeming jet-black hood which envelopes his head, and reaches some way down his breast; while the rest of his plumage, with the exception of the wing and tail, which are black, present a pale ash colour. Although the species is generally migratory, some few remain during the summer months in the northern parts of our island, where they frequent the mountainous portions of the country and build in pines.

WILD PIGEON—*Columba œnas*, Lin.

This migratory species is too well known to require de-

scription. They arrive from the north on the approach of winter, and continue in this country till the spring: a few, however, remain stationary, and change their haunts in quest of food. Their nests are constructed in the hollows of aged trees, and they have commonly two broods in the year. The natural historian of Selborne notices that, before the beechen woods were partially destroyed, the flocks were so numerous as to traverse the air like rooks, both morning and evening, reaching for a mile together. When thus rendezvousing by thousands, if they chanced to be suddenly roused from their roost-trees—

> "Their rising all at once was like the sound
> Of thunder heard remote."

These birds lead the same wild life as the Ring-Dove, frequenting groves and coppices, and consuming the beech-masts. Their soft voices are heard in solitary woods, and they roost in the tallest trees. Some naturalists conjecture that domestic pigeons owe their origin to this migratory race, but the supposition is incorrect. The wild Dove is larger, and distinguished from all others by two remarkable black spots on each wing; and though tempted by plenty of food and gentle treatment, can never be induced to relinquish his independence. Sir Roger Mostyn sought to allure them to his dove-houses in Caernarvonshire by all appliances most suited to their gentle nature, but in vain. They would come for a short period; but when the time arrived for building their nests, they betook themselves to Ormshead, and brought up their young among the inaccessible caves and fastnesses of that stupendous promontory. And thus has the poet feigned their answer to him who would woo them back:

> "We are free, we are free—we return no more,
> The weary time of our stay is o'er;
> Through the rolling clouds we can soar on high,
> The sky is around us—the bright blue sky!
>
> The hills lie around us, spread far and clear,
> With their glowing heath flowers and bounding deer;
> We see the waves flash on the sunny shore—
> We are free, we are free—we return no more!"—HEMANS.

WOODCOCK—*Scolopax Rusticola*, Lin.

The head of this wandering bird sufficiently distinguishes him from all others of his kind, being rather triangular than round, with the eyes placed near the top, and the ears very forward, nearly on a line with the corners of the mouth. The upper mandible, measuring about three inches, is furrowed nearly its whole length, projecting at the tip, and overhanging the under one, ending in a kind of knob, susceptible of the finest feeling, and admirably adapted to find small worms in the soft moist ground, and to extract them with the aid of a sharp-pointed tongue. The bill is also used to turn over and toss the fallen leaves, in search of such insects as shelter underneath. The plumage of the Woodcock is so beautifully varied with black and ash colour, white, gray, and red brown, rufous and yellow, marbled, spotted, barred, streaked and variegated; and so disposed in rows, and crossed and broken at intervals by lines and marks of different shapes, that the bird appears at a little distance like the withered stalks and ferns, the moss-covered and lichen-dotted sticks and grasses, by which he is sheltered in his lone and often moist retreats. A practised sportsman is alone enabled to discover him, by his full dark eye, and his glossy silver-white tipped tail. In plumage the female differs very little from the male. Security being equally essential to both, they are clad in sober plumes, and are thus frequently enabled to elude the vigilance of their pursuers.

Woodcocks are migratory. They leave such countries as border on the Baltic during autumn, and proceed immediately to Britain. Unlike Fieldfares, they come singly or occasionally in pairs, from the beginning of October till December, but uniformly in the night, or when the weather is dull and misty. Hence they are never seen to arrive, although they are found not unfrequently in some ditch or bank covered with rushes, especially after gales of wind, when they seem exhausted with fatigue. One day suffices to recruit their strength, after which they proceed inland, to their former haunts. When the weather is temperate, they retire to moss-clad moors, and high bleak mountainous parts of the country, where they find abundance of insect food. But when the

frost sets in and snow begins to fall, they repair to lower and more sheltered spots, with underwood and rills of water. In such places they remain concealed through the day, feeding only in the night; and among these, the females, after placing a few dry leaves and fibres at the root of some old tree, deposit four or five eggs, somewhat larger than those of a pigeon, of a rusty grey colour. The young, when hatched, immediately desert the nest, and are carefully attended by the parent birds, till able to provide for themselves. Thus passes away the Woodcock's allotted period of sojourn in this country. When the storms of winter begin to lull, and windy March has arrived, with lengthening days, and the earnest of brighter weather, Woodcocks are all in motion, gradually withdrawing towards the coast, where they await the first favourable wind for returning to their native country. Should adverse winds long continue, they are in no small danger from sportsmen who watch their coming. But the moment a change is felt, and cloudy weather or dark nights enable the Woodcocks to leave their covert, they mount the friendly gale and are borne safely to their final destination.

WINTER BIRDS OF PASSAGE,

COMPRISING WADERS AND SWIMMERS.

"But where the Northern Ocean in vast whirls
Boils round the naked melancholy isles
Of farthest Thulè, and the Atlantic surge
Pours in among the stormy Hebrides;
Who can recount what transmigrations there
Are annual made? what nations come and go?
And how the living clouds on clouds arise?
Infinite wings! till all the plume-dark air
And rude resounding shore are one wild cry."—THOMSON.

Speak we now of two separate divisions of the migratory species, *waders* and *swimmers*. Concerning the first

of these divisions, it may be noticed briefly, that their long bills are formed to perforate mud and yielding soil; and that their long legs, bare above the knees, enable them to wade through shallow waters in quest of food;—of the second, that, admirably adapted to live in water, they often mount the billows, and ride fearlessly amid the strife of contending elements—of both, that they change their haunts from one rock, or lake, or misty bog to another, as best suits them, till the sun begins to decline, and hollow blasts and falling snows warn them to depart. Then it is that the various tribes having gathered together their well-fledged families,

> "Consulting deep and various ere they take
> Their arduous voyage through the liquid sky:
> And now their route design'd, their leaders chose,
> Their tribes adjusted, clean'd their vigorous wings,
> And many a circle, many a short essay,
> Wheel'd round and round, in congregation full,
> The figur'd flight ascends, and, riding high
> The aërial billows, mixes with the clouds."—MILTON.

Each tribe or family directs its course with unerring precision, some to rocks, others to marshes, some to range over cultivated plains, others to the wildest and most sterile regions; but all and each according to the will of their Creator, and with an obvious reference to the necessities of man.

Among these the Anas genus is the most considerable, and includes ninety-eight varieties. The head of this family is the

WILD SWAN, ELK, HOOPER, OR WHISTLING SWAN—*Anas Cygnus terus*, Lin.

The Wild Swan measures five feet in length, and about seven in breadth; the bill is of a yellowish white, with a black tip; and a bare yellow space extends from the bill over the eye and eyelids; plumage in adult birds pure white, and next the skin a thick fine down; legs black.

This noble bird, as if conscious of his superior strength, moves with a majestic and easy gliding motion through

the water. His vigorous wings serve as shields against all aggressions, and so powerful are they as to stun or kill the fiercest of his foes. A wolf or fox may surprise him when asleep, but vain are their efforts in the light of day. His food consists of weeds and grass, seeds, or the roots of plants that grow beside all waters, and of such insects as skim over or float upon the surface. The stalks of reeds or rushes, with a few withered leaves, compose his humble nest, wherein the female deposits six or seven thick-shelled white eggs. While his mate is sitting, the lordly swan watches at a little distance, and woe to the unlucky wight who dares to intrude upon her nest.

Voyagers who observe the movements of this interesting bird, in the northern regions of the globe, relate that, at the setting in of winter, immense multitudes assemble on the lakes and rivers; and that when the cold becomes severe they mount into the air in search of milder climates. Then it is that they visit the British isles, and remain contentedly in their wildest portions till the spring, when their squadrons again soar upwards and return to the northern regions, with the exception of a few stragglers, who bring up their young among the stormy Hebrides. While thus progressing through the air, voyagers hear their loud shrill cries, in unison with the roaring of the surge; and grating as those cries may seem, resounding from high cliffs, they are often hailed by the mariner as welcome voices, when tossed to and fro amidst solitary rocks and isles, of which they are the only occupants.

And much they love such places, stern, rugged, inaccessible, where the foot of man may not tread, and where their young ones are cradled safely, with the sound of winds and mighty waters for their lullaby. The bleak shores and islands of Lapland and Siberia, Spitzbergen, Nova Zembla, Iceland and Norway, with the vast sweep of the Arctic zone, are consequently their chosen haunts. Barriers there are, likewise, beyond which no voyager has ever penetrated, reservoirs of frost and snow, firm fields of ice, and rocks on rocks, capped with an eternal mantle; stretching around the pole and seeming to concentrate the extreme of cold; yet even there the voyager far off at sea discerns, by the aid of glasses, among rocks, and through vistas reaching into unknown regions, swarms of sea-fowl.

THE GREY-LAG, OR WILD GOOSE—*Anas Anser*, Lin.

Bill of a yellowish red colour, with the nail white; head and neck cinereous brown, tinged with dull yellow; upper part of the plumage deep brown, mixed with ash grey, each feather lighter on the edges; lesser coverts tipped with white; breast and belly crossed and clouded with dusky ash, on a whitish ground; tail coverts of a snowy whiteness; middle feathers of the tail dusky, tipped with white; adjoining ones more deeply tipped; exterior ones nearly all white; legs pale red.

Such is the investment of the Wild Goose, whose migrations with that of his tribe have ever been a subject of great interest with the ornithologist. Their elevated and marshalled flight seems dictated by geometrical instinct, when a vast assemblage of these birds—

> "Ranged in figure, wedge their onward way,
> Intelligent of seasons, and set forth
> Their airy caravan high over seas
> Flying, and over lands with mutual wing
> Easing their flight; so steers the prudent *Goose*
> Her annual voyages, borne on winds; the air
> Floats, as they pass, fann'd with unnumber'd plumes."
>
> MILTON.

Regularly with the return of spring and autumn arrive and depart large flocks to and from this country. Some few remain, and bring up their young in the fens of Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire, but the greater part journey northward to their summer haunts, among the swamps and fastnesses of Siberia, Lapland, and Iceland. The northern regions of America are also their favourite resorts, abounding with the larvæ of gnats and myriads of insects, that swarm beneath the rays of an unsetting sun; and most curious is the spectacle which they afford, hissing, cackling, gabbling, waddling about with a grave deportment, or taking to the water, attended by their mates and young, with most gracious movements and bland sounds and courtesies. Amid those wild retreats the Geese range in undisturbed security, rejoicing in the abundance which surrounds them, injuring none, molested by none. But very different is their condition when migrating towards the civilised portions of the globe; there innumerable dangers await them. True it is that the

weary and hungry goose helps himself to the growing corn; that, untaught to step lightly, he treads down as much as he consumes. But whatever his need may be, or that of his young family, no excuse is made for him. Watchers assemble with long nets, resembling those used for catching larks, and into these the unsuspecting travellers are often decoyed by their tame brethren. Other schemes are contrived for their destruction, but with less success, for as these wary birds feed only in the daytime, and betake themselves to the water at night, the fowler must exert his utmost ingenuity in order to circumvent them. All his efforts must be attempted in the dark, and every trace of deception removed, for nothing can exceed the vigilant circumspection and acute ear of the sentinel goose, who, placed on some eminence during feeding-time, stands with outstretched neck surveying every object within the circle of the place whereon he stands; and the instant he sounds an alarm, the whole flock betake themselves to flight.

Others of the same family and tribe migrate to the shores of Britain, in smaller or larger flocks. The White-fronted or Laughing Goose, *Anas albifrons*, forming with his brethren part of the vast tribes that swarm around Hudson's Bay and the north of Europe and Asia during the summer months, visits the fens and marshy places of England in the winter; disappearing when the trees begin to leaf, and the sallow is in blossom. Unlike their relatives the Wild Geese, they never feed on corn, but confine themselves wholly to marshy places. The Bean Goose differs from the Grey Lag Goose simply in the bill, which is small, compressed towards the end, whitish, occasionally pale red in the middle, black at the base and nail; of which the latter, shaped somewhat like a horse-bean, gives a cognomen to the tribe. Feeding upon green wheat, and trampling more than he consumes, the Bean-goose has none to welcome his arrival in the autumn. Brief, however, is his sojourn, for scarcely has he arrived in Britain than he hastens to be gone.

THE BARNACLE, CLAKIS, OR TREE-GOOSE—*Erythropus*—Lin.

This bird, prettily marbled or barred with blue, grey,

black, and white, having a white face, and a seeming jet-black hood covering the crown of the head, descending down the back, and forming a kind of breastplate, beautifully contrasted with the white of the under surface, arrives late in the year, and after resting for a short time, departs when Spring

> "Has look'd o'er the hills of the stormy north,
> And the larch has hung all his tassels forth,
> When the fisher is out on the sunny sea,
> And the rein-deer bounds o'er the pastures free,
> And the pine has a fringe of softer green,
> And the moss looks bright where his foot hath been."
>
> HEMANS.

Very different are the visitations of the Eider or St. Cuthbert's Duck, the *Anas mollissima*, which is too well known to require description. Welcome birds, coming, not as transient guests, whose visitations are regretted from the mischief which they do, nor yet as scarcely seen before they depart, but eagerly watched for, and rejoiced in, by the expecting natives. Cold Siberia confesses her obligations to this useful species; Greenland likewise, with her rock-bound coasts; Iceland, Spitzbergen, Lapland, and parts of Norway, where the Eiders flock together in such numbers, and their nests are so close together, that a person in walking can hardly avoid treading upon them. They affect likewise the Hebrides, or Western Isles of Scotland; as also the Fern Isles, off the coast of Northumberland, their most southern limits in this quarter of the globe. Although resorting to the wildest places, they are yet susceptible of kindness; the Icelanders, especially, succeed in taming them, and so confiding are they as to build their nests close by the dwellings of the natives. Female Eiders lay five or six eggs about the beginning of June; and it happens not unfrequently that two birds are seen in the same nest, with sixteen eggs, sitting harmoniously side by side. Six or seven weeks are generally occupied in making these deposits, during which time the natives visit them, at least once every week, for the sake of the eggs and down. They carefully remove the female, and take away the down and a few eggs; after which she lays afresh, and covers the eggs with down plucked anew from her breast. Another visit succeeds, and again the

eggs and down disappear; upon which the male comes to her assistance, and contributes his own down. When this occurs, the nest is left unmolested, and the unsuspicious bird continues sitting till her young are hatched. Each female, during the time of laying, yields generally half a pound of down; and so numerous are the flocks of Eider Ducks, that Iceland alone exports fifteen hundred or two thousand pounds of down, exclusive of what is sold privately. When the young are hatched they immediately quit the nest, and follow their mother, who leads them to the water. Taking the nurslings on her back, she swims with them a few yards, then dives, and leaves them to float on the water. Still her quick glancing eye takes note of the "wee things," and if danger approaches, she darts in a moment to their aid:

"Up and down, up and down,
From the base of the wave to the billow's crown,
Amidst the flashing and feathery foam,
The wandering Eider-Duck finds a home:—
A home, if such a place may be,
For her who lives on the wide, wide sea,
On the craggy ice, in the frozen air,
And only seeketh her rocky lair
To rear her young, and to teach them to spring
At once o'er the waves on their stormy wing."

Myriads of the Scoter, or Black Diver, *Anas nigra;* the Mallard, or Common Wild Duck, *Anas boschas;* the Gadwall, or Grey Duck, *Anas strepera;* the Widgeon, *Anas Penelope;* and the Pockard, *Anas ferina,* visit in autumn the shores of Britain, spreading either over fenny and rush-grown districts, or making the rocks resound with their wild cries. To particularise them is unnecessary: those who visit their places of resort will have no difficulty in ascertaining their names, and obtaining specimens; they are equally well known as the Swallow tribe.

The wanderer through lonely places, where high beetling rocks meet and repel the incessant assaults of raging waves, often hears above the billowy war, a peculiar whistle sounding in the air. This is occasioned by the vigorous and quick strokes of innumerable wings, when the Golden Eyes, *A. clangula,* are about to depart in spring. In unison with such wild scenes, is likewise the loud shrill

cry of the Long-tailed Duck, or Swallow-tailed Shieldrake, *A. Glacialis*, which is seen with his companions about sunset in vast companies, going to and returning from the bays of the Orkney islands, with clamours that may be heard for miles. The Solan Geese or Gannets, *Pelicanus bassanus*, too, are there, making the rocks resound with their loud voices, and when rising in vast flocks from off the ledges, their favourite resorts, they stun the ear with their noise, and shadow the ground like clouds. Their visitations are invaluable to the sterile regions which they frequent, and the natives watch eagerly for their coming. These birds are common on the coast of Norway and Iceland, and congregate in considerable numbers about New Holland and New Zealand, bringing up their young on the shores of Newfoundland, and migrating southward along the American coast as far as South Carolina; but their chief resort is the Hebrides and rocky islands of North Britain, where it is difficult to walk without treading on their nests.

Those who delight to trace the wonders of creation from one country to another, would do well to visit the islands of the north at the season when sea fowls resort thither; and among these we may briefly notice, as their favourite haunts, the Islands of Barra and St. Kilda, Ailsa in the Frith of Clyde, the Stack of Loaliskerry near the Orkneys, Bass in the Frith of Forth, and Skilly off the coast of Kerry; and so numerous are they, that even in a cloudless day the heavens are darkened above the mariner who sails beneath, by the myriads that rise from off their rocky ledges, and when disturbed by the firing of a gun, their clamours resound over the deep dread roar of the weltering waves.

Among those wild rocks the fowler plies his adventurous trade. Trained from early life, and urged by necessity, he does not shrink from launching off the brink of hideous precipices, with a raging sea beneath, and terrific rocks that project from among the billows.

First looking warily from some giddy height, he traces his downward progress over the jutting rocks, which often descend at least a hundred fathoms to the sea, and then reverently committing himself to the Divine protection, he prepares for the arduous undertaking, and is let down

by a rope either fixed to a stake or held by his companions, having with him his signal cord, pole net, and hook. He may be seen at one time swinging from ledge to ledge with the help of his hook; at another mounting upwards, and clambering from place to place, or swinging backwards, and then darting with increased celerity into some cavern where the sea-birds have made their nests, and from whence he collects either birds or eggs, which are put within the net and drawn up on a signal being given, or tossed into the boat beneath which accompanies his progress. The fowler occasionally sleeps within some such cavern when storms are abroad, or the day is too far advanced to admit of his being safely drawn up; lulled, it may be, by the roar of the raging blast, or the awful surging of the waves beneath, sounding louder as the night comes on. How thrilling in such a place must be the thoughts of home, or perchance of some hearth beside which the ear of a beloved one is turned fearfully to the hollow moan of the gusty blast, and the distant booming of the billows, while many a prayer ascends for him who watches alone in the cavern of the wild sea cliff!—and equally to her, as to the chamois hunter's love, is applicable the exquisite effusion of the muse of Hemans:—

"And I will leave my blessed home, my father's joyous hearth,
With all the voices meeting there in tenderness and mirth,
With all the kind and laughing eyes, that in its firelight shine,
To sit forsaken in thy hut, yet know that thou art mine.

To listen for thy step in vain, to start at every breath,
To watch through long, long nights of storm, to sleep and dream of death,
To wake in doubt and loneliness—this doom I know is mine,
And yet I will be thine, my love! and yet I will be thine!

That I may greet thee from thy rocks, when thence thou comest at last,
That I may hear thy thrilling voice tell o'er each danger past,
That I may kneel and pray for thee, and win thee aid divine,
For this I will be thine, my love! for this I will be thine!"

THE END.

London: Printed by William Clowes and Sons, Stamford Street.